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Kids losing 1.5 yrs of school due to heat

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6 top firms' mcap slumps ₹94.4K crore

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Kamboj added to India squad amid injury crisis

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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Puri erupts in protest after teen set ablaze

BHUBANESWAR, 20 JULY

The police on Sunday imposed Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) outside the All Indian Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) campus here after protests by different groups over a 15-year-old girl being immolated in Puri disrupted hospital services. While half the protesters were driven away, the remaining were detained. A team of police personnel will also remain in place to prevent such protests near the hospital in fiuture. *—PTI*

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Japan's ruling coalition likely to lose key polls

TOKYO, 20 JULY

Exit polls indicate that Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's ruling coalition is expected to lose its majority in the upper house of Japan's Diet during Sunday's elections, worsening the nation's political instability. Voters were casting ballots for half of the 248 seats, with Ishiba aiming for a simple majority of 125 seats. Media forecasts suggest his coalition, comprising the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its junior partner Komeito, may secure only between 32 and 51 seats, a significant drop from the 141 held previously. Key voter concerns include rising prices, stagnant incomes, and stringent measures against foreign residents. Discontent with the LDP has led to a rise in support for populist parties, particularly Sanseito, which has adopted a hardline anti-foreigner stance. Despite the electoral setback, an immediate change of government is unlikely, as the upper house cannot initiate a no-confidence motion. *—PTI*

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Centre agrees to debate on Op Sindoor in Parliament

PM is unlikely to respond & will skip the session till 26 July

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Ahead of the Monsoon Session of Parliament starting Monday, the Centre has agreed to the Opposition's demand for a debate on Operation Sindoor. The decision came after an all-party meeting convened by the government on Sunday, though key Opposition parties TMC) and AAP skipped the meet.

Sources indicate that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is unlikely to respond in Parliament and will be absent from 23 and 26 July due to a foreign trip. However, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju assured that the government will respond appropriately during the debate, including on US President Donald Trump's recent claims of brokering a ceasefire between India and Pakistan.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is expected to make a detailed statement on Operation Sindoor, which was launched on 7 May in response to the 22 April terror attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, that killed 26 people. Singh held two key meetings on Friday with ministerial colleagues and military top brass in preparation.

The Opposition is also set to raise concerns over a perceived two-pronged attack by China and Pakistan, and has demanded discussions on the ongoing crisis in Manipur. Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi highlighted that violence in the state has persisted for over 2.5 years.

This session, scheduled to run until 21 August with breaks on 13–14 August for Independence Day, will also see discussions on the Centre's handling of regional inequalities. Jharkhand Mukti Morcha MP Mahua Maji criticised the Centre's "step-motherly" treatment of Jharkhand, pointing out the state's mineral wealth versus its poverty status.

The INDIA bloc also met separately, where Congress' Pramod Tiwari demanded the prime minister be present and address Parliament, stressing, "Parliament is more important than travelling abroad." Omar Abdullah proposed raising the issue of statehood for Jammu and Kashmir. The AAP, a founding INDIA bloc member, has exited the alliance and skipped the meeting. The TMC also stayed away. DMK was represented, but its leader MK Stalin was absent.

Key bills expected to be tabled include the Manipur GST (Amendment) Bill, Jan Vishwas Bill, IIM Bill, National Sports Governance Bill, Income Tax Bill, Indian Ports Bill, and the Scheduled Tribes Representation Readjustment Bill for Goa. *—PTI*

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SATELLITE PICS SUGGEST INDIA HIT PAK NUKE SITE IN KIRANA HILLS

Satellite images shared by defence expert Damien Symon on X indicate that Kirana Hills, a sensitive nuclear-linked facility in Pakistan, was hit during India's Operation Sindoor. The first image highlights munitions impact scars and a sentry post at Kirana Hills, while the second shows repair work on craters at the nearby Sargodha airbase runway. Kirana Hills, under Pakistan's Ministry of Defence, lies close to Sargodha airbase, stretching from Rabwah to Sargodha city. In May, India's Air Marshal AK Bharti denied any strike on Kirana Hills and claimed Indian forces were unaware of its nuclear significance.

'100s RAPED, KILLED'

SIT to probe Dharmasthala 'secret burials'

BENGALURU, 20 JULY

PHOTO: FREEPIK/AI

The Karnataka government has constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe alarming allegations of multiple murders, sexual assaults, and disappearances of women in the Dharmasthala region of Dakshina Kannada district, spanning over two decades.

The SIT will be led by Pranav Mohanty, Director General of Police, Internal Security Division. Other members include Additional Commissioner of Police (Recruitment) M N Anucheth, DCP (CAR Headquarters) Soumya Latha, and SP (Internal Security Division) Jitendra Kumar Dayama.

The decision follows a letter from Karnataka State Women's Commission Chairperson Nagalakshmi Choudhary, referencing a court statement from an individual who claimed "hundreds of bodies were buried in the Dharmasthala area".

The case gained public attention after a whistleblower filed a complaint at Dharmasthala police station earlier this month, alleging that he was forced to cremate bodies and threatened against approaching authorities. He claimed the victims, mostly women, bore signs of rape and sexual assault.

Subsequently, a woman named Sujatha, a Bengaluru resident, filed a complaint alleging her daughter went missing after visiting the temple town. She accused a BJP MP and requested help in exhuming her daughter's remains for a proper burial.

The Women's Commission cited media reports of a human skull being found and statements from the family of a missing medical student as further evidence of a "disturbing pattern of abuse, unnatural deaths, and disappearances" affecting women and students over the past 20 years. A case has been registered under Section 211(a) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) at Dharmasthala Police Station. The SIT has been empowered to investigate all related cases across the state. It will function with support from the Dakshina Kannada District Police and report regularly to the DGP. *—PTI*

SOAKED & SURPRISED

Monsoon showers brought smiles as people hurry to seek shelter in front of Vidhana Soudha, enjoying rain-soaked Sunday afternoon in Bengaluru *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

Chargesheet says Jagan got kickback in Rs 3,500 cr Andhra liquor scam

AMARAVATI/ VIJAYAWADA, 20 JULY

The Andhra Pradesh Police have filed a 305-page chargesheet in the alleged Rs 3,500 crore liquor scam, naming former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy as a recipient of kickbacks averaging Rs 50–60 crore per month during the 2019–2024 YSRCP regime. However, Jagan has not been named as an accused. The court is yet to take cognisance of the chargesheet.

The chargesheet alleges that funds collected were routed through accused Kesireddy Rajasekhar Reddy (A-1), who passed them to YSRCP leaders Vijay Sai Reddy (A-5), Midhun Reddy (A-4), Balaji Govindappa (A-33), and ultimately to Jagan. Rajasekhar Reddy, dubbed the mastermind, is accused of manipulating the excise policy, planting loyalists in APSBCL, creating shell distilleries, and laundering funds through 30+ shell firms. He allegedly routed Rs 250– Rs 300 crore in election funds for YSRCP.

The scam, which involved replacing automated Order for Supply (OFS) systems with manual processes, was allegedly aimed at extracting 12–20 per cent kickbacks from distillers. Witness testimony confirmed the involvement of senior leaders, including a meeting in 2019 chaired by Sajjala Sridhar Reddy (A-6), where distillers were coerced into paying bribes.

YSRCP MP PV Midhun Reddy was arrested on Saturday after hours of interrogation and remanded to judicial custody until 1 August by Vijayawada's ACB court. He had undergone a medical check-up prior to the court appearance.

YSRCP leaders condemned his arrest, calling it political vendetta. Jagan, in a post on X, termed it "a conspiracy to silence those who stand with the people." *—PTI*

AI crash: Centre backs AAIB amid West's criticism

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu Kinjarapu on Sunday urged restraint in drawing conclusions over the Air India crash in Ahmedabad, stating the government will await the final report before commenting. His statement follows reports by The Wall Street Journal and Reuters that appeared to blame the pilots, despite no official findings so far.

Kinjarapu criticised the speculative nature of some Western media coverage, suggesting potential bias, and praised the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) for decoding the black box data domestically — a first for India.

He reiterated the importance of patience and confirmed that while the preliminary report has been reviewed, premature assumptions would be inappropriate. "We are studying the report thoroughly and will take all necessary safety measures," Kinjarapu added.

In a significant move, the AAIB has also brought in Captain RS Sandhu, a veteran pilot and former Director of Operations at Air India, as a domain expert in the investigation, sources said on Sunday.

The crash, which occurred on 12 June in Ahmedabad, claimed 260 lives.

The final report is expected to provide clarity on the causes and suggest safety interventions.—*PTI*

MUMBAI'S NEW NORMAL?

No Marathi? Get out: Train tiff turns ugly

MUMBAI, 20 JULY

A heated argument over a seat in a Mumbai local train has sparked a larger language row, with one woman telling another to "speak Marathi or get out". The incident occurred on Friday evening in a packed ladies' coach on the Central line and was captured on video, which has since gone viral.

In the footage, six to seven women can be seen arguing over a seat – a common occurrence in Mumbai locals. However, the dispute escalated when one woman criticised another for not speaking in Marathi, sparking a broader debate among fellow passengers. No formal complaint has been filed, though the Railway Protection Force and Government Railway Police are investigating, according to officials.

In the video, women were seen arguing over a seat *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

The episode comes amid rising tensions in Maharashtra over the Marathi language, fuelled by confrontational tactics from Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) workers.

Earlier this week, MNS members assaulted a shopkeeper in Vikhroli over a WhatsApp status allegedly offensive to Marathi speakers. The man was forced to apologise on camera. On 1 July, MNS workers in Thane slapped a street food vendor for refusing to converse in Marathi.

- In Palghar, a migrant autorickshaw driver was attacked by MNS and Sena (UBT) supporters, while in Mumbai, MNS workers vandalised the office of businessman Sushil Kedia.

In Palghar, a migrant autorickshaw driver was attacked by MNS and Shiv Sena (UBT) supporters, while in Mumbai, MNS workers vandalised the office of businessman Sushil Kedia after he publicly refused to learn Marathi. CCTV footage showed them hurling bricks at his office before being stopped by a security guard. Kedia later issued a public apology. *—Agencies*

Bidar MLA's son booked for raping ex-fiancé

BIDAR, 20 JULY

Bidar police have registered an FIR against Prateek Chavan, son of BJP MLA Prabhu Chavan, following rape allegations by a young woman from Maharashtra. The woman claims Prateek, 28, promised to marry her, with their engagement held on 25 December, 2023, in the presence of both families. However, she alleges that after the engagement, Prateek took her to various places in Maharashtra and forced a physical relationship without her consent, assuring her of marriage.

The complaint states Prateek later broke his promise to marry. When the woman's family confronted him, they were allegedly assaulted by Prateek and his family. The victim had earlier approached the State Women's Commission. The police have registered the FIR under sections 376(2)(n), 506, 366, and 324 of the IPC, with investigations underway.

The woman was engaged to Prateek Chavan *PHOTO: SALAR*

BJP MLA Prabhu Chavan has accused BJP leader and former Union minister Bhagwanth Khuba of orchestrating a political conspiracy against him and his family. At a press conference, he described Khuba as a "master of lies".Regarding the complaint, Prabhu Chavan said the engagement was mutually called off in November 2024 after discovering the woman was communicating with another man. He claimed both families agreed to cancel the wedding. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

3 nursing students drown in KRS dam backwaters

MYSURU, 20 JULY

Three nursing students studying in Mandya who were on tour drowned in backwaters of KRS near Meenakshipura in Mysuru taluk on Sunday. According to the police, the deceased have been identified as Prashanth 21, Sidda, 20, and Krishna, 21. Yelawala Police rushed to the village and retrieved the bodies with the help of expert swimmers from the Fire and Emergency Service Department. Yelawala Police have registered a case and investigation is underway. *—Salar News*

Woman killed as tree falls on car in Karwar

KARWAR, 20 JULY

A tragic accident occurred in Karwar town of the State on Sunday when a massive tree fell on a parked car, resulting in the death of a woman on the spot. The victim, Lakshmi Pagi, was accompanying her pregnant daughter-in-law, Sunita, who is eight months along, to a routine maternity check-up at their local hospital. While alighting from the vehicle, the large tree collapsed, leading to Lakshmi's immediate fatality. Remarkably, Sunita managed to escape unharmed through the back door of the car. She is currently receiving treatment at Pikale Maternity Hospital. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: ANI

Police seize 23.84kg of ganja in Belagavi haul

BELAGAVI, 20 JULY

In a significant operation, Belagavi police have seized 23.840 kg of ganja valued at nearly Rs 6 lakh and arrested three individuals. Authorities also confiscated a vehicle and two mobile phones during the operation. Acting on specific intelligence, the Udyambhag station team, led by Inspector DK Patil, conducted a raid near AKP Foundry. There, they apprehended Deelip Doddamani, Nikhil Somajiche, and Veeresh Hiremath, who were found in possession of the illegal substance. "The quantity recovered from the trio marks the largest seizure in Belagavi in recent days," stated the police commissioner. *—Salar News*

Kabini dam renovation gets ₹32 crore

After CM had 'snubbed' DyCM in Mysuru, they appear united during baagina

MYSURU, 20 JULY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his Deputy DK Shivakumar on Sunday offered 'baagina' (a traditional offering) to the Kabini River and said Rs 32.25 crore had been approved for the dam's renovation, along with a slew of irrigation and development projects for the region.

"A sum of Rs 32.25 crore has been approved for the renovation work," Siddaramaiah said, adding that there are also plans to develop a garden near Kabini similar to the iconic Brindavan Gardens near the KRS dam.

The current water level at the dam stood 2283.83ft against its maximum 2,284ft with an outflow of 15,000 cusecs of water to downstream Kapila river.

Proposals have also been submitted for the modernisation of the Taraka Reservoir canal and other irrigation systems around Kabini, a Cauvery tributary, in HD Kote taluk.

Shivakumar said that repair works at State's dams would be taken up on priority basis once the technical Committee on dam safety submits its report.

"We had set up a technical committee on dam safety after one of the gates at Tunga Bhadra reservoir was damaged," he said. "We will take necessary action once we receive the report."

Shivakumar, who also holds the water portfolio, said his department has also sent a proposal of Rs 88 crore to the Union government under the Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project for rejuvenation of its safety.

He added, "Kabini was not full for the last two years but is full this year. Kabini has been of great help during poor rain years. Our MLAs have given a proposal to develop the area".

Asked about the botanical garden project proposal gathering dust, he said, "Investors must come forward. Our priority right now is efficient use of water and reservoir safety."

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and others offer baagina to Kabini river at HD Kote, in Mysuru district, on Sunday *PHOTO: SALAR*

The show of solidarity between the two comes after Siddaramaiah allegedly snubbed Shivakumar during the Sadhana Samavesha event in Mysuru on Saturday, attended by Party President Mallikarjun Kharge.

While addressing the gathering and acknowledging dignitaries on the dais, Siddaramaiah omitted Shivakumar's name—prompting criticism and sparked speculation, especially since Shivakumar had left the venue earlier to travel to Delhi.

Siddaramaiah dismissed the BJP's reaction as "political mischief. The BJP is trying to find pebbles in the curd—making an issue out of a non-issue".

He added, "How is it an insult if someone who has already left the venue is not named? "

Shivakumar, too, played down the episode.

"The BJP leaders seem to have too much love for me," he said with a laugh. "The stronger you are, the more admirers you attract."

He clarified that there was no politics about the trip. "I had to travel to Delhi for a meeting with my lawyer, it was a personal trip."

—Salar News with Agencies

Mysuru event was to humiliate DKS, Ashoka claims

BENGALURU, 20 JULY

The Mysuru Sadhana Samavesha event in Mysuru held by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah was not a government programme, but was organised to sideline Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, Opposition Leader R Ashoka claimed. Congress party leaders are fighting on the streets, he quipped.

Speaking to reporters, he said the event exposed the internal rift within Congress. No one spoke in favour of Shivakumar, Ashoka said, claiming that the meeting was held to to humiliate Shivakumar.

"Shivakumar has now become a second-tier leader. It was not a government program; it was a ritual to finish off Shivakumar," he said.

"The BJP does not need to topple this government; it will collapse due to Congress's internal conflicts. Their disputes are now out in the open," he added.

MLAs themselves have called Siddaramaiah a "lottery CM", Ashoka added. *—Salar News*

Helpline opened for bribe complaints

BENGALURU, 20 JULY

The Commercial Taxes Department (CTD) has launched a dedicated helpline to combat corruption and ensure strict action against erring staff, to address complaints regarding bribe demands by officials concerning UPI-related matters.

The additional commissioner of commercial taxes has reportedly said that the department has received information through media and other sources that certain officers and staff have allegedly demanded bribes in connection with UPI-related issues.

It has also come to the attention of the department that a few middlemen are demanding money from traders under the pretext of offering assistance in such matters, the department.

Taking serious note of the issue, the department reiterated its zero-tolerance policy towards corruption and assured that appropriate action would be taken against officials or staff found guilty.

Traders are urged to report such incidents by contacting the department's helpline at **18004256300**, which is available from 8.00am to 8.00pm on working days. *—PTI*

Bommai says 'unfair' GST will hurt small shops, DKS says its Centre's fault

BENGALURU, 20 JULY

Former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai and BJP MP, condemned the State's Commercial Tax Department for what he termed an "unfair imposition" of Goods and Services Tax (GST) dues on small and micro businesses. In a post on X, Bommai referred to the situation as a "GST shock" for small traders and called for immediate intervention from Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

"Under the GST law, there are certain concessions for conducting business transactions. There is a system where tax must be paid after availing those concessions," he claimed. "By inviting representatives of the concerned small business owners for discussions and providing them with all kinds of concessions, assistance should be extended to them under the tax settlement scheme, just as it is done for other taxpayers."

However, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said small traders and street vendors are facing problems due to the GST introduced by the BJP government in the Centre.

"We have made several appeals to the Centre for funds for the last two years, but none of the BJP MPs are speaking for the state. They are not concerned about the poor of the State".

—Salar News with Agencies

State to set up training centres in Namibia

BANGALORE, 20 JULY

State's Government Tool Room and Training Centre (GTTC) will establish a vocational training unit in Namibia, marking potentially the first Indian government knowledge agency on African soil.

The move came after Namibia selected the GTTC as its technical knowledge and vocational training partner.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) formalising the collaboration was recently signed by D. YK Dinesh Kumar of GTTC and Anil Shinde, General Secretary of the Africa India Economic Foundation (AIEF), in the presence of Dr. Sharanaprakash R Patil, Minister for Medical Education, Skill Development, Entrepreneurship, and Livelihood, at Vikasa Soudha.

Patil described GTTC as a robust model for Africa's industrial skilling needs, highlighting its potential for "seamless adaptation to African contexts." The partnership is expected not only to build skilled talent in Namibia but also to create new employment avenues for GTTC graduates across Africa and open additional markets for State-based MSMEs. "This is about empowering Karnataka's soft power through education diplomacy," the minister remarked.

AIEF officials underscored Namibia's appeal for such a partnership, citing its rich natural resources—including uranium, diamonds, gold, and rare earth minerals—as well as its rapid development in marine, energy, agribusiness, logistics, and tourism sectors.

With a five-decade legacy, GTTC operates over 20 centres across State, training thousands each year in precision toolmaking, CNC operations, mechatronics, and robotics. *—Salar News*

A DAY OF FESTIVITIES

Left to right: After performing pooja during the holy month of Shravana, Nepalis and others from North India visited Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Sunday; Devotees perform the Kavadi ritual at Sri Kumaraswamy Temple, Hanumantha Nagar, in Bengaluru, on Sunday *PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD*

36% INCREASE FROM 2024

State saw 2.3L dog bites, 19 rabies deaths in 6 months

BENGALURU, 20 JULY

In the past six months, State has recorded more than 2.3 lakh dog bite cases and 19 rabies deaths, indicating a sharp increase of 36 per cent compared to the corresponding period last year, according to official data released on Sunday.

According State Health Department's Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) data, Karnataka registered 2,31,091 dog bite cases and 19 rabies deaths between 1 January and 30 June this year.

In comparison, the same period last year saw 1,69,672 dog bite cases and 18 rabies deaths.

An analysis of the data shows that dog bite cases have increased by approximately 36.20 per cent compared to the corresponding period in 2023.

The recent surge in concern was fuelled by a viral video showing a three-year-old girl being attacked and dragged by two stray dogs on the streets of Hubballi, this week.

Harsh Gupta, Principal Secretary of the Health and Family Welfare Department, said the situation is not out of control.

"The number of cases appears high now because they are being reported more accurately. Even earlier, similar incidents were occurring, but now there is better reporting," he said.

Outlining the department's efforts to curb such incidents, Gupta added, "We are focusing on creating awareness, training doctors on how to treat dog bite victims, ensuring the availability of medicines in sufficient quantities, and instructing urban local bodies and rural administrations to manage the stray dog population."

He said even minor scratches or small bites require immediate medical attention, as they can lead to infections.

Health officials pointed out that the reporting of dog bite cases and rabies deaths has been the highest since 2022, when State declared human rabies a notifiable disease under the Karnataka Epidemic Diseases Act, 2020. Since then, all government and private health facilities are mandated to report all suspected, probable, and confirmed human rabies cases to the State Health Department. *—PTI*

AREAS WITH HIGHEST NUMBER OF DOG BITES

Vijayapura 15,527	Dakshina Kannada 12,524
BBMP limits (excluding B'luru Urban): 13,831	Bagalkot 12,392
Hassan 3,388	Bengaluru Urban 8,878
	Bengaluru Rural 4,408

AREAS WITH FEWEST NUMBER OF DOG BITES

Yadgir:	4,408
Chamarajanagara:	1,810
Kodagu:	2,523

RABIES RELATED DEATHS:

Bengaluru Urban:	Belagavi:
9	5

'My friend reached Dubai, but I'm still stuck in traffic'

BENGALURU, 20 JULY

The City's infamous traffic congestion has once again sparked viral discussions online after a relatable Instagram post depicted one individual landing in Dubai while their friend was still ensnared in the city's notorious gridlock.

The video, shared by food and travel vloggers Priyanka and Indrayani, featured the caption: "Dropped my friend at Bangalore Airport as she was leaving for Dubai. She reached Dubai, and I'm still stuck in Bangalore's traffic."

This resonated with numerous residents, triggering a wave of sympathetic responses.

Many users recounted similar experiences. "My parents dropped me at the airport and they reached home at the same time as I landed in Delhi," commented @purvi_spammmm.

Another resident, @kjjdilip, said it actually happened to them, when they remained stuck in traffic while their sister had reached in Mangaluru. *—Agencies*

M'LURU MULTI-STATE CONMAN IN CUSTODY

MANGALURU, 20 JULY

Roshan Saldanha, a Mangaluru-based man accused of defrauding businessmen across several states of several crore rupees, has been remanded to judicial custody.

The accused, who was arrested earlier this week, is facing multiple FIRs related to financial frauds, police said.

Police produced Saldanha before a court on Saturday night, which ordered a judicial custody for him.

Mangaluru South (CEN) police, who are already investigating two earlier cases involving Rs 11 crore and Rs 2 crore, have now received fresh complaints. A Maharashtra-based businessman alleged that Rs 5 crore was transferred to Saldanha's account on July 16. Similarly, a businessman from Assam claimed a loss of Rs 20 lakh on July 17.

Police have since directed banks to freeze the accused's accounts.

Chitradurga police may also seek his custody in connection with a separate case involving a Rs 40 crore fraud filed by an Andhra Pradesh businessman. Mangaluru Police. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Kerala govt flags textbook shortage in KVs

T'PURAM, 20 JULY

Kerala General Education Minister V Sivankutty on Sunday sought immediate intervention of the Centre to resolve the shortage of textbooks in Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) in the state. He highlighted that students of Classes 5 and 8 in KVs are still without essential books, even four months after the commencement of the classes. With just days left for the first quarterly examinations, the negligence on the part of NCERT authorities, who are supposed to distribute books, is extremely serious, the minister pointed out in a statement. Though classes began on 1 April, months later, teachers only have the study material online, the Minister pointed out. *—PTI*

Interpol Red Notices reach 100 in India

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

India has witnessed a dramatic increase in Interpol Red Notices since 2023, with the number soaring to 100 for the year, more than double compared to previous years. This uptick follows strategic discussions during India's hosting of the Interpol General Assembly and the G20 Summit, accompanied by advances in technology and diplomatic engagement. In 2025 alone, 145 Interpol Notices have been issued, a significant rise from 73 in 2020. Since then, the CBI has successfully coordinated the extradition or deportation of 134 fugitives, with 23 returned this year. Officials stress the need for continued improvement to prevent fugitives from finding refuge in other countries. *—PTI*

Conversion case: 1 more arrested in Uttar Pradesh

LUCKNOW, 20 JULY

The Uttar Pradesh Anti Terrorism Squad (ATS) has arrested another accused in connection with the religious conversion syndicate allegedly led by Chhangur Baba alias Jamaluddin, officials said on Sunday. The accused, identified as Rajesh Kumar Upadhyay, was arrested on Saturday, they said. The arrest comes days after Jamaluddin and his close aide, Nasreen, the alleged masterminds of a covert network involved in religious conversions across Uttar Pradesh and beyond, was arrested from Uttar Pradesh. According to police officials, the gang operated for over 15 years and used a variety of manipulative tactics, including honey-trapping, targeting minors, and enlisting influential individuals to facilitate conversions. *—ANI*

Biometrics of 7 cr school children to be updated

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) is set to initiate a biometric update project for children through schools, beginning in approximately two months. UIDAI CEO Bhuvnesh Kumar revealed that over 7 crore children have yet to update their biometrics, a requirement upon reaching the age of five. The updates will be conducted with parental consent and are currently in the technology testing phase. Mandatory Biometric Updates (MBU) are crucial for maintaining the integrity of biometric data, with the risk of Aadhaar deactivation if not completed by age seven. Free of charge for ages five to seven, an update incurs a fee of Rs 100 thereafter. Additionally, UIDAI plans to implement a second MBU for teenagers aged 15, using mobile biometric machines rotated across schools in each district to ensure accessibility. *—PTI*

Oppn set to corner govt over SIR in Parl

As Monsoon session begins, Opposition says EC is being used to implement NRC

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

The upcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament, starting 21 July, is expected to be stormy, with the Opposition's INDIA bloc ready to corner the government on several contentious issues, including US President Donald Trump's repeated claims of brokering a ceasefire between India and Pakistan and the revision of electoral rolls in Bihar.

In an online strategy meeting held Saturday, leaders from 24 Opposition parties, including Congress, TMC, RJD, NCP-SP, Shiv Sena (UBT), JMM, CPI(M), and CPI, agreed to raise eight key issues. These include alleged foreign policy failures, particularly concerning Gaza, atrocities against Dalits, tribals, women and minorities, the delimitation exercise, and what they call the erosion of federalism.

Congress General Secretary KC Venugopal and Rajya Sabha Deputy Leader Pramod Tiwari accused the BJP of using the Election Commission as a tool to carry out a "backdoor NRC" in Bihar through the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. Tiwari described it as "vote-bandi," comparing it to demonetisation, and labelled the current atmosphere an "undeclared Emergency."

The INDIA bloc also plans to raise Operation Sindoor, the Ahmedabad plane crash, and judicial controversies *PHOTO: PTI*

AI plane crash, Justice Varma's impeachment

The INDIA bloc also plans to raise Operation Sindoor, the Ahmedabad plane crash, and judicial controversies. They are expected to demand the impeachment of Justice Yashwant Varma, after burnt currency notes were found at his residence, and push for action against Justice Shekhar Yadav, accused of delivering a hate speech, an impeachment notice for whom has been pending since December 2024.

New Income Tax Bill

Meanwhile, on the legislative agenda, the government will table the long-awaited report on the new Income Tax Bill, 2025, in the Lok Sabha on Monday. Chaired by BJP MP Baijayant Panda, the 31-member Select Committee has made 285 recommendations.

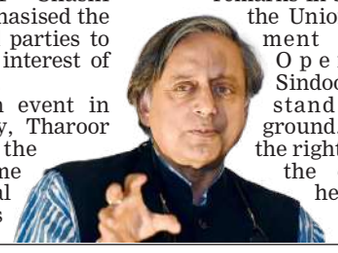
The simplified Bill, which replaces the 1961 Act, reduces word count from 5.12 lakh to 2.6 lakh, trims sections from 819 to 536, and halves the number of chapters. It also replaces the term "assessment year" with "tax year" to ease taxpayer compliance. *—PTI*

Parties must unite for nation: Tharoor

KOCHI, 20 JULY

Amid speculations of rift with Congress' high command over his views on Emergency, Thiruvananthapuram MP Shashi Tharoor has emphasised the need for political parties to cooperate in the interest of national security.

Speaking at an event in Kochi on Sunday, Tharoor asserted that the nation must come first, with political parties serving as vehicles for improvement.



"Whichever party you belong to, the objective is to create a better India," he stated, referring to the recent criticism against him for his remarks in support of the Union government over Operation Sindoor. "I will stand my ground... this is the right thing for the country," he asserted.

Responding to questions about his relationship with Congress, he highlighted the importance of collaboration among parties during critical times, asserting that "politics is inevitably about competition, but that should not hinder unity in moments of national importance."

Tharoor further explained that "nation first" has always been his guiding philosophy, and he remains committed to serving India. *— Agencies*

Over 100 MPs backed motion to remove Justice Varma: Rijiju

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju announced that more than 100 MPs have signed a notice to bring a motion for the removal of Justice Yashwant Varma in Parliament. This significant support surpasses the threshold required for tabling impeachment proceedings in the Lok Sabha.

Rijiju confirmed that the signature collection is ongoing and that the motion will likely be introduced in the Lower House as Parliament's Monsoon Session begins on Monday. He stated that the Business Advisory Committee would decide when the motion will be presented. The government has indicated bipartisan support, highlighting concerns over judicial corruption.

All political parties stand united in addressing the issue to maintain integrity within the judiciary. *—PTI*

KEEPS PROMISE

Statehood is our right: Omar rules out hybrid govt

SRINAGAR, 20 JULY

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Sunday made a forceful plea for the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir without further delay, and indicated that all avenues, including legal options were supposedly being explored by the ruling National Conference (NC) party in this regard.

Nearly 10 months after the party swept to power in the Union Territory, Abdullah asserted that statehood was a fundamental right of the people.

"The Centre had promised it in Parliament and before the Supreme Court," he said.

Abdullah dismissed the talk of a "hybrid system" of government under which law and order would continue to be with the Centre even after statehood is restored.

The CM said that such talk was emanating from those who had cast doubts about the last year's Assembly elections, in which over 64 per cent of voters participated.

CONG ACTIVISTS DETAINED

Meanwhile, Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) Tariq Hameed Karra was among scores of activists detained on Sunday by police during their march for statehood here.

This was the second time in as many days that police did not allow Congress to hold a rally, held under the banner 'Hamari Riyasat Hamara Haq'.

On Saturday, a congress rally was stopped by police in Srinagar. Hundreds of Congress activists led by Karra and party general secretary GA Mir assembled at party headquarters at Shaheedi Chowk in the heart of Jammu. *—PTI*

TMC to take out rally to back migrants

KOLKATA, 20 JULY

With an eye on assembly polls next year, the TMC is gearing up to turn its annual Martyrs' Day rally into a powerful platform to sharpen its Bengali pride narrative and hit out at the BJP over the alleged harassment of Bengali-speaking migrants in saffron-ruled states.

Set against the backdrop of rising tensions over the linguistic profiling and treatment of Bengali migrant workers in BJP-governed states such as Assam, Odisha, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Delhi, the 21 July rally in Kolkata's Esplanade is expected to see Trinamool Congress supremo and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee issue a clarion call to her party workers, reiterating her message that "Bengalis are not second-class citizens in their own country".

Preparations underway for TMC Martyrs' Day Rally in Kolkata *PHOTO: PTI*

Meanwhile in Agartala, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has invited a delegation of Tipra Motha Party (TMP) for a meeting on July 23 to discuss the concerns raised by the party about possible enrolment of illegal immigrants in Tripura's voter roll, TMP supremo Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma said.

Debbarma in a social media post said, "We raised our concerns about possible enrolment of illegal immigrants in Tripura's voters' list and demanded a Bihar - like Special Intensive Revision (SIR). The Election Commission of India has taken note of it and called us for a meeting on 23 July to discuss these issues." The dicussion is likely to pave the was for a solution. *—PTI*

Modi to sign India-UK free trade deal

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will embark on a four-day visit to the United Kingdom and the Maldives from Wednesday to shore up overall bilateral ties and ink the landmark India-UK free trade deal.

Modi will first travel to the UK on a two-day trip and then will visit the Maldives to grace the island nation's Independence Day celebrations as "guest of honour", according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

The Prime Minister's visit to the Maldives from 25 to 26 July marks a reset of bilateral ties that had come under severe strain after Mohamed Muizzu, known for his pro-China leanings, came to power in November, 2023.

In the first leg of his trip, Modi will visit the UK on 23 and 24 July to hold wide-ranging talks with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, the MEA said on Sunday.

India and the UK are expected to formally sign the free trade deal during PM Modi's visit to London, people familiar with the matter said.

It will be the first visit by an Indian head of state since President Muizzu assumed office in November 2023. *—PTI*

TRF social media handle threatens Bilal

SRINAGAR, 20 JULY

Kashmir Fight, a notorious social media handle linked to proscribed terror outfit The Resistance Front (TRF), has issued a warning to former separatist leader Bilal Gani Lone who recently announced his decision to shun separatist politics & enter mainstream.

In a social media post, the Kashmir Fight said the pronouncement by the "puppet Bilal Lone merely unveils the authentic self he has clandestinely concealed for numerous years". Lone, in an exclusive interview to PTI, has held the Hurriyat Conference responsible for its own "irrelevance", calling the separatist conglomerate "non-functional", while also slamming Pakistan for creating a "mess" and "fissures" in J&K. The comments of Lone on Saturday marked a significant departure from traditional separatist rhetoric, acknowledging that both the Hurriyat and Pakistan had "faltered" on opportunities to bring progress to the region.

US State Department recently announced TRF as a "designated Foreign Terrorist Organization and Specially Designated Global Terrorist." *—PTI*

Over 12,000 new polling stations in Bihar: EC

According to a release issued by the EC, the total number of polling stations has risen to 90,712 from 77,895, after the establishment of 12,817 new ones *PHOTO: ANI*

PATNA, 20 JULY

The Bihar government said that more than 12,000 new polling stations have been created in the state as per recommendation of Election Commission (EC), as part of Special Intensive Revision (SIR).

According to a release issued by the EC on Saturday, the total number of polling stations has risen to 90,712 from 77,895, after the establishment of 12,817 new ones. Of these, 12,479 polling stations have been set up "at the same building or premises housing the existing ones", while the remaining ones are "in the vicinity". A "district-wise list" of the newly formed polling stations has been shared with the registered political parties.

- A "district-wise list" of the newly formed polling stations has been shared with the registered political parties.

Notably, ahead of the 25 July deadline, EC has claimed to have covered "95.92 per cent" of the voters as part of SIR.

Besides, of the 7.9 crore registered voters, the number of those "not found at their address" has reached 41.64 lakh. *—PTI*

ROHIT PAWAR UNDER SCRUTINY

'NCP unable to function without BJP'

NAGPUR, 20 JULY

- "The ruling NCP faction is unable to function without consulting the BJP, which is why even as there are several issues related to agriculture pending and eight farmers committing suicide daily in the state, the agriculture minister, who has no work, appears to have time to play rummy," the NCP (SP) legislator wrote in the post.

NCP (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar on Sunday criticised the ruling NCP faction, saying it is unable to function without consulting the BJP, by posting a purported video of Maharashtra Minister Manikrao Kokate playing a game on his mobile phone during the state assembly.

Pawar made the remark in a post on X and shared a purported video of NCP leader and state Agriculture Minister Kokate playing rummy on his mobile phone in the state legislative assembly.

"The ruling NCP faction is unable to function without consulting the BJP, which is why even as there are several issues related to agriculture pending and eight farmers committing suicide daily in the state, the agriculture minister, who has no work, appears to have time to play rummy," the NCP (SP) legislator wrote in the post.

The NCP and Minister Kokate were not available for comment despite repeated attempts.

Meanwhile, Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Vijay Wadettiwar accused the Mahayuti government of being "deceitful" and "treacherous" towards farmers. *—PTI*

Manikrao Kokate allegedly playing a mobile game during Assembly *PHOTO: X/ Rohit Pawar*

3 Kanwariyas arrested for assault on CRPF jawan

MIRZAPUR, 20 JULY

- The incident occurred when the jawan, en route to Manipur for duty, attempted to purchase tickets for the Brahmaputra Express.

Three kanwariyas were arrested for allegedly assaulting a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawan following a dispute over train tickets at the Mirzapur railway station on Sunday.

The incident occurred when the jawan, en route to Manipur for duty, attempted to purchase tickets for the Brahmaputra Express. The kanwariyas heading to the Baidyanath Dham in Jharkhand also wanted tickets in the same train.

Government Railway Police Inspector Raghavendra Singh said the jawans deployed on the spot tried to control the situation and subsequently, more force was sent to help the CRPF jawan. A case has been registered and the arrested were later released on bail.

In a separate incident in Meerut, women volunteers at a kanwar seva camp alleged misconduct by three policemen. They claim the officers behaved indecently & recorded videos of the incident.

The volunteers apprehended the policemen, but the police post's in-charge allegedly allowed them to leave.

In response, demonstrators staged a dharna demanding action. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

'Don' director Chandra Barot dies at 86

MUMBAI, 20 JULY

Renowned filmmaker Chandra Barot, who directed the iconic 1978 film 'Don' starring Amitabh Bachchan, died at the age of 86 from a cardiac arrest. His wife, Deepa Barot said that he had been receiving treatment for Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis for the past 11 years. Prior to 'Don', Barot assisted director Manoj Kumar on numerous films, including 'Purab Aur Pachhim' and 'Roti Kapada Aur Makaan'. His legacy continued with a Bengali film, 'Aashrita' (1989). 'Don' achieved cult status and inspired a successful franchise, directed by Farhan Akhtar in 2006 with Shah Rukh Khan in the lead. The upcoming third instalment will feature Ranveer Singh. He is survived by his wife and son. —*PTI*

Singer Rahul Sipliganj to get Rs 1 cr incentive

HYDERABAD, 20 JULY

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Sunday announced an incentive of Rs 1 Crore for popular singer Rahul Sipligunj, who catapulted to fame with the Oscar-winning 'Natu Natu' song from the film 'RRR'. Sipligunj serves as an inspiration to Telangana's youth, especially given his humble beginnings from the old city of Hyderabad, an official release quoted the CM as saying. Before the Assembly elections in 2023, Reddy, then Congress president for Telangana, had announced financial assistance of Rs 10 lakh to Sipligunj, it said. He had also promised an incentive of Rs 1 crore to the singer if the Congress came to power. —*PTI*

Airhostess raped by colleague in Maharashtra

THANE, 20 JULY

A 23-year-old airhostess was allegedly raped by her colleague at his home in Maharashtra's Thane district, police said on Sunday. Police have arrested the accused, a resident of the Mira Road, on Friday in connection with the assault that took place on 29 June, an official said. An FIR has been registered against the 25-year-old accused, said senior inspector Dhiraj Koli of the Navghar police station. He said the woman and her colleague had returned to the city after a work trip to London on 29 June. "Upon their return to Mumbai, the accused allegedly took the victim to his house, where he molested and raped her," he said. —*PTI*

Puri erupts in protest after teenager set afire

Girl with 70% burns airlifted to AIIMS in Delhi for treatment

BHUBANESWAR, 20 JULY

The police on Sunday imposed Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) outside the All Indian Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) campus here after protests by different groups over a 15-year-old girl being immolated in Puri disrupted hospital services.

While half the protesters were driven away, the remaining were detained. A team of police personnel will also remain in place to prevent such protests near the hospital in fiuture.

Due to the protests outside the burn unit led to chaos and difficulty for the attendants and patients admitted there. BJD and Congress workers also gathered outside the hospital as they were barred from entering inside.

AIIMS even issued a notice disallowing protests outside the hospital.

Meanwhile, BJP leader Babu Singh cautioned against politicising the issue and emphasised that the next 72 hours are medically crucial for the patient.

Singh said, "This is not right. I think the politicisation of the issue is not right. CM has said that if necessary, the patient will be airlifted to Delhi AIIMS as well."

Meanwhile, the girl with 70 per cent burns was airlifted to Delhi later on Sunday.

A green corridor was set up to take the patient from AIIMS Bhubaneswar to Biju Patnaik International Airport, and one platoon of police force was deployed.

She was taken in an advanced life support ambulance with a dedicated medical team.

After reaching the airport, she boarded an air ambulance for the national capital.

Three youths forcibly took the girl, a school dropout, to a river bank near Puri's Bayabar village, poured an inflammable substance on her, and set her on fire on Saturday.

The girl's mother lodged an FIR. Investigations are underway. —*PTI/Agencies*

AIIMS, Bhubaneswar staff shift the 15-year-old girl to Bhubaneswar airport, where she was airlifted to AIIMS, New Delhi on Sunday. Her condition is said to be critical ***PHOTO: PTI***

A TEARFUL ADIEU

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann pays his last respect to the mortal remains of world's oldest marathoner, 114-year-old Fauja Singh during his last rites at his native village Beas, in Punjab's Jalandhar district on Sunday. Singh's funeral was conducted with full state honours ***PHOTO: PTI***

Bihar hospital murder: Prime accused nabbed

PATNA, 20 JULY

The Bihar police on Sunday said they have arrested the prime accused and his three associates for the murder of gangster Chandan Mishra inside a private hospital in Patna.

Those arrested include prime accused Tauseef alias Badshah, his associate Nishu Khan and two others. They were nabbed by the police forces of Bihar and West Bengal in a joint operation in Kolkata on Saturday evening and later brought to Patna.

A police statement on Sunday said, "Prime accused Tauseef, who was wanted by the police in an Arms Act case, and his three associates were arrested by a joint team of Bihar and West Bengal Police from Kolkata on Saturday."

Bihar's additional director general of police Kundan Krishnan, who stoked a controversy by linking the recent rise in violent crimes in the state to crop seasons, apologises for his comments ***PHOTO: PTI***

Patna Senior Superintendent of Police Kartikeya K Sharma said all four will be produced before a court here and police will seek their remand for custodial interrogation. Mishra, a murder convict on parole was shot dead by gunmen inside a hospital in Patna. —*PTI*

Chopper's blade hit cable: Report

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

A preliminary probe into the helicopter crash that killed six people in Uttarakhand in May has found that the main rotor blade of the chopper struck an overhead fibre cable, before tumbling down the hillside and coming to rest against a tree.

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) said on Saturday that the investigation team is trying to find the root cause of the accident.

The chopper that crashed in Uttarkashi in May, killing six people and injuring one ***PHOTO: ANI***

The 17-year-old Bell 407 helicopter operated by Aerotrans Services Pvt Ltd, with six passengers onboard, crashed 24 minutes after being airborne on May 8.

The pilot and five passengers died in the accident, while one passenger sustained serious injuries.

AAIB said that the helicopter, which was airborne from Kharsali helipad at 8.11 am on May 8, was destroyed in the crash but there was no fire. The accident happened at Gangnani in Uttarkashi in Uttarakhand. —*PTI*

Kerala HC prohibits use of AI in legal reasoning

KOCHI, 20 JULY

In a groundbreaking initiative, the Kerala High Court has introduced a policy governing the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools within the district judiciary, explicitly prohibiting their use for decision-making or legal reasoning. The 'Policy Regarding Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools in District Judiciary' encourages responsible application of AI, emphasising that such tools should serve merely as assistive resources.

The court advised judges to exercise "extreme caution" to avoid potential privacy violations and threats to data security. All members of the district judiciarymust adhere to principles of transparency, accountability, and human supervision when engaging AI tools. —*PTI*

SC to hear on consumers' right to know product quality

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

The Supreme Court is set to hear a petition on 21 July asserting that consumers have a "right to know" about product quality, purity, and seller details. Petitioner Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay argues that this transparency is essential for informed consumer choices and protection against deceptive practices. The plea seeks mandates for distributors to display their registration details prominently, facilitating effective redressal for consumers.

Simultaneously, the Court will address a suo motu case regarding probe agencies summoning advocates during investigations, following the Enforcement Directorate's controversial summons to senior lawyers. The ED has since directed its officers not to issue such summons without prior approval, citing concerns over the legal profession's autonomy. This dual focus highlights critical issues regarding consumer rights and legal privilege, pivotal for ensuring fair practices in markets and justice system. —*PTI*

Orange alert on in 9 Kerala districts

T,PURAM, 20 JULY

Kerala is currently experiencing heavy rainfall, with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issuing an orange alert for nine districts due to rising water levels in rivers and dams. The affected districts include Ernakulam, Idukki, and Thrissur, among others. An orange alert indicates very heavy rainfall forecasts of 11cm to 20cm. A yellow alert is also in place for five other districts, warning of heavy rainfall. The IMD predicts strong surface winds of up to 40km/h in some areas. In Palakkad, several dams, including Malampuzha and Siruvani, have opened their shutters to manage rising water levels. Danger alerts for the Manimala and Mogral rivers, were issued, urging residents to stay vigilant. —*PTI*

DUE TO EXTREME WEATHER

Kids losing 1.5 yrs of school due to heat

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Children exposed early to extreme heat may lose up to 1.5 years of schooling with climate change having a direct impact on education and threatening to undo educational gains of recent decades, a new global report stated.

Most low and middle-income countries are experiencing climate-related school closures every year, increasing chances of learning loss and dropout, it noted.

The report compiled by UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring (GEM) team, Monitoring and Evaluating Climate Communication and Education (MECCE) project and University of Saskatchewan in Canada stated that in the past 20 years, schools were closed in 75 per cent of the extreme weather events, impacting over five million people.

Most low and middle-income countries experience climated-related school closeur, resulting in learning loss and dropout ***PHOTO: AI***

An analysis linking census and climate data in 29 countries between 1969 and 2012 showed that exposure to higher than average temperatures during the prenatal and early life period is associated with fewer years of schooling, especially in Southeast Asia.

About half of public school districts need to update or replace multiple heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems.

Of the 10 countries most affected by extreme weather events in 2019, eight were low- or lower-middle-income countries.

Of the 33 countries identified as bearing extremely high climate risks for children, 29 are also considered to be fragile states.

The team flagged that increasingly frequent natural disasters, including floods and cyclones, have led to the deaths of students and teachers and have damaged and destroyed schools. —*PTI*

CAN'T PROBE EVERYTHING

'ED not a drone to attack at will'

CHENNAI, 20 JULY

Madras High Court has observed that the ED was not a "drone" to attack at will, and nor was it a "super cop" to investigate anything and everything which comes to its notice.

The court said this while hearing the plea by RKM Powergen Private Ltd, challenging the Enforcement Directorate (ED) seizing Rs 901 crore of its fixed deposits in connection with a PMLA case.

The ED action came on the basis of an FIR registered by the CBI in 2014 over the allocation of coal blocks for a power plant in Chhattisgarh earlier.

It filed a closure report in 2017 after finding no irregularities in coal blocks allocation.

CBI filed a supplementary final report stating that there were sufficient incriminating materials warranting prosecution. The ED raided the premises of directors and holding companies associated with RKMP. It froze fixed deposit to the tune of Rs 901 crore. The company challenged the said order and the court set it aside.

The bench said that if during investigations, the ED comes across violations of other provisions of law, it cannot investigate them. The appropriate agency, empowered by law and on ED's intimation, will investigate and register a complaint. ED can investigate, provided there are "proceeds of crime." —*PTI*

WILL GURGAON GET INDIA'S FIRST DISNEYLAND?

Disney's first project in India is likely to come up in Gurgaon. Though Disney has not announced it, its officials are being consulted for the Mickey Mouse & Co Park near Manesar.

HERE'S ALL ABOUT THE AMUSEMENT PARK

LOCATION:

A 500-ACRE near Pachgaon Chowk, in Manesar, 61km away from New Delhi

- It is near KMP Expressway and Haryana Orbital Rail Corridor connecting entire Haryana.
- The project will create direct and indirect jobs.
- It is also expected to bring in foreign tourists, which will boost local businesses and realty.

WHY GURGAON?

- The upcoming Global City is a 1,000-acre project linked to Delhi-Gurgaon and Dwarka expressways.
- 30km southwest of New Delhi, people from NCR can easily visit the park.
- IT companies make it a major financial centre.

PREVIOUS PROPOSALS OF DISNEYLAND

- 1989: Then Haryana CM Om Prakash Chautala proposed Disneyland in Gurgaon but it was stalled due to opposition from parties and farmers.

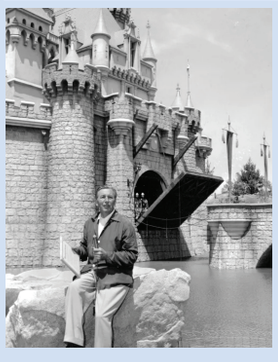
DISNEYLAND ACROSS THE GLOBE

12 Total Disneyland theme parks

6 Total Disneyland resorts

LOCATED IN: US (California & Florida), France, Japan, China (Hong Kong & Shanghai

HOW DID DISNEYLAND START?



Disneyland was first opened in Anaheim, California in 1955

- It was built by Walt Disney, who was inspired while watching his daughters on a merry-go-round.

DISNEYLAND ATTRACTS 18 MILLION VISITORS annually, generating nearly $3 billion in spending.

RESEARCH: SAARIYAH IRAM

BONALU FESTIVAL

Thousands of worshippers gathered at the Simhavahini Mahakaali temple at Lal Darwaja, in Hyderabad, on Sunday to celebrate the Bonalu festival. The festival honours Goddess Mahakali and is celebrated annually in Hyderabad and Secunderabad during the Hindu month of Ashadha. During the festival, women cook rice along with milk and jaggery in a new earthen or brass pot adorned with neem leaves, turmeric, and vermilion. The women then carry these pots on their heads and make an offering of traditional meal, bangles and sarees to the Goddess

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Drones emerge as ground workers for J&K terrorists

Drones have emerged as the new "Over Ground Workers" (OGWs) for terror groups in Jammu and Kashmir, causing concern among security agencies as this shift from human networks to unmanned aerial vehicles for surveillance and logistics marks a new frontier in the region's security landscape, officials said here on Wednesday.

The reliance on the human network of OGWs has drastically been cut down as many of them have been arrested or have gone into hiding due to increasing pressure from the security forces, they said.

The shift from human networks to drone technology is a new frontier in asymmetric warfare, with Pakistan's ISI also intensifying its efforts to push terrorists across the Line of Control (LoC) with the help of drones, the officials said.

Some of the terrorists holed up in heights in the Kashmir region, as well as in Kishtwar and Rajouri, have been using these drones for maintaining surveillance over the approaching troops, they said while citing it as a reason for the little success in past counter-terror operations.

The drones, in some instances, are believed to be carrying dry ration for the holed-up terrorists in the higher reaches of the Jammu region, the officials said.

The use of drones by terrorist groups to target vital installations in Jammu and Kashmir began on 27 June, 2021, when two unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) struck buildings at the Jammu airport, marking a significant escalation in the conflict.

Post 2017, the use of drones initially for drug smuggling and later for arms dropping along the International Border in Punjab was viewed by the officials as the first step before shifting their use for direct attacks in Jammu and Kashmir.

The officials said the ISI is leveraging drone technology for precise real-time situational assessments ahead of infiltration attempts.

The officials said the ISI is leveraging drone technology for precise real-time situational assessments ahead of infiltration attempts ***PHOTO: PTI***

The officials also said that under the new strategy, the ISI has been using drones for monitoring the presence of the army along the Line of Control or the International Border, identifying vulnerabilities and analysing terrain to assist terrorists in crossing the LoC while minimising the risk of detection.

There were credible inputs that in third week of May this year, ISI officials and top terrorists of the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed outfits in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) had a meeting during which focus was laid on increasing recruitment and the "importance of drone surveillance along the LoC to monitor conditions prior to infiltration attempts, the officials said.

They said there were plans to replace active guides with local residents from PoK or Pakistan to manage infiltration routes more effectively.

The officials said that ISI was working on a detailed plan for the terror outfits that included relocating terror training camps and launching pads within PoK and constructing underground bunkers in preparation for potential armed conflict with India.

This move from ISI is believed to be a response to "Operation Sindoor," in which the Indian Air Force targeted and destroyed nine terror facilities in PoK and Pakistan which included the headquarters of the banned Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba terror groups.

The rise of drone technology has opened a new and dangerous chapter in global terrorism, with UAVs now being used by terror groups for a variety of nefarious operations, including intelligence collection and the delivery of explosives.

A report from the Association of the United States Army (AUSA), a nonprofit professional association dedicated to serving America's Army, said, "Once Pandora's box was open, bad actors adapted quickly and began using drones to plan and conduct attacks."

The report had said that terrorist organisations are learning lessons from previous conflicts and are continuously adapting their methods. The first use of drones by terrorists was by the Islamic State during military operations in Iraq's Mosul, where they deployed UAVs for both reconnaissance and bomb dropping.

As seen in past conflicts, these groups are learning and evolving their tactics. The rapid advancements in drone technology and its increasing accessibility provide new avenues for terror outfits to sow fear and execute attacks, complicating counter-terrorism efforts, officials said. —*PTI*

SALAR سالار

Reconnect with nature to tackle Covid, says scientist

Scientist Ajai Kumar Sonkar ***PHOTO: X***

Shunning today's "sterilised" and "hyper-clean" lifestyle and reconnecting with natural elements like soil, rivers, fresh air can strengthen people's immune system and better prepare them to face Covid-like pandemics in future, renowned scientist Ajai Kumar Sonkar has said.

In an exclusive conversation with PTI, Sonkar, whose development of pearl-making techniques through state-of-the-art tissue culture surprised the world, used an analogy comparing the human body to a mobile phone.

"By coming in touch with nature, the human body gets information about bacteria and their evolving forms just like a mobile phone needs regular software updates to function properly," he said.

"Like Covid, any future pandemic will not occur merely due to bacteria and viruses, but because of our own biological mistakes. To deal with such a nightmare, we must reconnect with nature," said Sonkar, who was awarded Padma Shri, India's fourth-highest civilian award, in 2022.

Sonkar, who has conducted in-depth research for years on microbiology and aquatic biology in India and abroad, said, "Modern humans have become so sterilised that now their bodily immune system is unable to even recognise environmental pathogens."

"As long as humans were in contact with soil, rivers, and natural air, their immune system continuously received information about bacteria and their evolving forms (microbial updates), just like how mobile phones receive regular software updates," he added.

Sonkar said today's "hyper-clean" culture has distanced the people from this natural protective shield.

"We have not only sterilised our homes but have also separated our bodies from the microbes that protect us from diseases," he said.

Revealing a particularly startling finding from his research, he said the Ganga River is a living microbial network that reads the microbial data of anyone entering it and responds with protective bacteriophages -- viruses that destroy harmful bacteria.

"When people bathe in the river, they introduce their body's microbes to the Ganges, and in return, the Ganges protects them by destroying pathogens through bacteriophages," he said.

"This gives natural training to the human body's immune system. This is the reason why people who come in contact with it are more resistant to new diseases," Sonkar, who is considered among the world's leading scientists on microbiome and bacteriophages of the Ganga, said.

Sonkar, who has spent decades researching microbiology and aquatic ecosystems in India and abroad, claimed that developed nations like the US and those in Europe were severely affected by Covid due to "microbial amnesia."

"Societies like Europe and America have been victims of 'microbial amnesia' for decades. People there live in such clean and sterilised environments that no new 'data' reaches their immune systems.

"They are cut off from the changing forms of bacteria/viruses. As a result, whenever a new bacterium arrives, the body takes time to recognise it and the death rate increases," he said.

When asked about the way forward, Sonkar said, "We must reconnect with nature. We must see the Ganga not just as a sacred river but as a teacher... Reactivating the biological systems of soil, rivers, and air could be the real strategy to prevent pandemics.

"Vaccination is only an insufficient response. In a constantly changing climate environment, vaccination can never replace natural microbial intelligence. Living with the natural ability to fight bacteria and their new forms is the real prevention of any pandemic," he added. —*PTI*

Ajai Kumar Sonkar said today's "hyper-clean" culture has distanced the people from this natural protective shield ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

'Children living near fuel wells face higher risk of rare leukemia'

Long-term survival rates exceed 90 per cent, but many survivors face lifelong health challenges ***PHOTO: PTI***

Acute lymphocytic leukemia is one of the most commonly diagnosed cancers in children, although it is rare. It begins in the bone marrow and rapidly progresses.

Long-term survival rates exceed 90 per cent, but many survivors face lifelong health challenges. Those include heart conditions, mental health struggles and a greater chance of developing a second cancer.

Overall cancer rates in the US have declined since 2002, but childhood acute lymphocytic leukemia rates continue to rise. This trend underscores the need for prevention rather than focusing only on treatment for this disease.

A growing body of literature suggests exposure to the types of chemicals emitted from oil and natural gas wells increases the risk of developing childhood acute lymphocytic leukemia.

We are environmental epidemiologists focused on understanding the health implications of living near oil and natural gas development operations in Colorado and Pennsylvania.

Both states experienced a rapid increase in oil and natural gas development in residential areas beginning in the early 21st century. We've studied this issue in these states, using different datasets and some different approaches.

2 studies, similar findings

Both of our studies used a case-control design. This design compares children with cancer, known as cases, with children without cancer, known as controls. We used data from statewide birth and cancer registries.

We also used specialized mapping techniques to estimate exposure to oil and natural gas development during sensitive time windows, such as pregnancy or early childhood.

The Colorado study looked at children born between 1992 and 2019. The study included 451 children diagnosed with leukemia and 2,706 children with no cancer diagnosis. It considered how many oil and natural gas wells were near a child's home and how intense the activity was at each well. Intensity of activity included the volume of oil and gas production and phase of well production.

The Colorado study found that children ages 2-9 living in areas with the highest density and intensity wells within 13kms of their home were at least two times more likely to be diagnosed with acute lymphocytic leukemia. Children with wells within five kilometers, of their home bore the greatest risk.

The Pennsylvania study looked at 405 children diagnosed with leukemia between 2009 and 2017 and 2,080 children without any cancer diagnosis. This study found that children living within two kilometers of oil and natural gas wells at birth were two to three times more likely to be diagnosed with acute lymphocytic leukemia between ages 2 to 7 than those who lived farther than 1.2 miles away.

The risk of developing leukemia was more pronounced in children who were exposed during their mother's pregnancy.

That study found children diagnosed with acute lymphocytic leukemia were four times more likely to live in areas with a high density of oil and natural gas wells than children diagnosed with other cancers.

Policy implications

To extract oil and natural gas from underground reserves, heavy drilling equipment injects water and chemicals into the earth under high pressure. Petroleum and contaminated wastewater are returned to the surface. It is well established that these activities can emit cancer-causing chemicals. Those include benzene, as well as other pollutants, to the air and water.

The US is the world's largest producer of oil and natural gas. There are almost 1 million producing wells across the country, and many of these are located in or near residential areas. This puts millions of children at increased risk of exposure to cancer-causing chemicals.

In the US, oil and natural gas development is generally regulated at the state level. Policies aimed at protecting public health include establishing minimum distances between a new well and existing homes, known as a setback distance. These policies also include requirements for emission control technologies on new and existing wells and restrictions on the construction of new wells.

Setbacks offer a powerful solution to reduce noise, odors and other hazards experienced by communities near oil and gas wells. However, it is challenging to establish a universal setback that optimally addresses all hazards. That's because noise, air pollutants and water contaminants dissipate at different rates depending on location and other factors.

In addition, setbacks focus exclusively on where to place oil and natural gas wells but do not impose any restrictions on releases of air pollutants or greenhouse gases. Therefore, they do not address regional air quality issues or mitigate climate change.

Future research

More research is needed in other states, such as Texas and California, that have oil and natural gas development in residential areas, as well as on other pediatric cancers.

One such cancer is acute myeloid leukemia. This is another type of leukemia that starts in bone marrow and rapidly progresses. This cancer has exhibited a strong link to benzene exposure in adult workers in several industries, including the petroleum industry. Researchers have also documented a moderate cancer link for children exposed to vehicular benzene.

It remains unclear whether benzene is the culprit or if another agent or combination of hazards is an underlying cause of acute myeloid leukemia.

Even though questions remain, we believe the existing evidence coupled with the seriousness of childhood acute lymphocytic leukemia supports enacting further protective measures. We also believe policymakers should consider the cumulative effects from wells, other pollution sources and socioeconomic stressors on children and communities. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X @IRANINTL_En

One killed in fire at Iran's largest oil refinery

TEHRAN, 20 JULY

A fire broke out at Iran's oldest and largest oil refinery, located in Abadan, resulting in the death of one worker, as reported by state media on Sunday. The incident occurred due to a leaky pump in a unit undergoing repairs, which was extinguished by firefighters within two hours. Some workers reportedly sustained injuries, as confirmed by Iran's deputy parliament speaker, Ali Nikzad. The Abadan refinery, operational since 1912, accounts for approximately 25 per cent of the country's fuel production, processing over 5.2 million barrels of oil daily. This incident is part of a broader trend, with multiple fires reported in Iran this past week. Despite Iran being one of the the largest oil producers, sanctions by Western nations have hurt sales. *—PTI*

Indian-origin doc booked for trading drugs for sex in US

NEWAR, 20 JULY

An Indian-origin doctor in New Jersey, Ritesh Kalra, 51, has been charged with distributing medication without a legitimate medical purpose in exchange for sexual favours. According to the US Attorney's Office, Kalra allegedly ran a "pill mill" from his medical office, frequently prescribing high doses of opioids, including oxycodone, and promethazine with codeine. Over a period from January 2019 to February 2025, he issued more than 31,000 prescriptions, sometimes exceeding 50 in a single day. Kalra is also accused of billing for fictitious consultations. He made his initial court appearance on Thursday and is currently under home incarceration with a bond of $1 million, while his medical practice is suspended. *—PTI*

5 dead after ferry catches fire near Indonesia

MANADO, 20 JULY

A passenger ferry carrying hundreds of people caught fire at sea on Sunday off Sulawesi island in Indonesia, killing at least five people, officials said. More than 280 people were rescued and evacuation efforts were ongoing. The KM Barcelona 5 was headed to Manado, the capital of North Sulawesi province, from Talaud, an island district in the province when it caught fire in waters near Talise, said Vice Adm Denih Hendrata, commander of the Indonesian Fleet Command. Rescuers retrieved five bodies, including a pregnant woman. Three navy ships had been deployed, and 284 passengers and crew members had been evacuated so far. The rescue operation included assistance from local fishermen, who successfully saved several of the passengers. *—PTI*

Bulgarian authorities seize 206kg of cocaine

BULGARIA, 20 JULY

Bulgarian border officials have made one of the largest drug seizures in the country's history, confiscating nearly 206 kilograms of cocaine hidden in a Belgian-plated van attempting to cross into Turkey. The drugs, valued at approximately 20 million euros (USD 22 million), were discovered during a vehicle inspection, concealed in 179 sealed bags in five suitcases. Haskovo District Prosecutor Ivan Stoyanov identified the three individuals involved, including a 40-year-old diplomat from the Democratic Republic of Congo, a 54-year-old Belgian citizen, and a 43-year-old Bulgarian driver. If convicted of drug trafficking, they could up to 20 years in prison. *—PTI*

Syria's armed Bedouins withdraw from Druze-city

Prez says militants cannot replace state as ceasefire holds

MAZRAA, 20 JULY

Syria's armed Bedouin clans on Sunday announced that they had withdrawn from the southern city of Sweida following over a week of clashes, as per a US-brokered ceasefire agreement.

The clashes between militias of the Druze religious minority and the Sunni Muslim clans killed hundreds and threatened to unravel Syria's already fragile postwar transition. Israel also launched dozens of airstrikes in the Druze-majority Sweida province, targeting government forces who had effectively sided with the Bedouins.

A series of tit-for-tat kidnappings sparked the clashes in various towns and villages in the province, which later spread to the city. Government forces were redeployed to halt renewed fighting that erupted Thursday, before withdrawing again.

Interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa, tried to appeal to the Druze community while remaining critical of Bedouin militias. He later urged the Bedouins to leave the city, saying that they "cannot replace the role of the state in handling the country's affairs and restoring security."

Bedouin fighters ride in a truck in Mazraa village on the outskirts of Sweida city, in southern Syria, Saturday PHOTO: PTI

"We thank the Bedouins for their heroic stances but demand they fully commit to the ceasefire and comply with the state's orders," he said.

The Bedouins' withdrawal brought a cautious calm to the area, with humanitarian convoys reportedly on their way. The Syrian Red Crescent said they are sending 32 trucks to Sweida loaded with food, medicine, water, fuel and other aid, after the fighting left the province with power cuts and shortages. *—PTI*

73 PALESTINIANS WAITING FOR AID KILLED AS CEASEFIRE TALKS STALL

Deir al Balah, 20 July

The Palestinian Health Ministry said that 73 people were killed while waiting for aid at locations across Gaza on Sunday. The largest toll was in northern Gaza, where at least 67 Palestinians were killed while attempting to access aid entering northern Gaza through the Zikim crossing with Israel, according to the Health Ministry and local hospitals. More than 150 people were wounded, some critically, hospitals said. The killings come as the Israeli military published new evacuation warnings for areas of central Gaza, where majority of the aid distribution sites are located, as ceasefire talks between Hamas and Israel have reportedly stalled. *—PTI*

TRUMP SAYS ANY NEW IRAN NUKE SITES WILL BE OBLITERATED

Washington, 20 July

US President Donald Trump has said that any new nuclear facilities that Iran decides to build will be destroyed, while doubling down on the administration's claim that America's military strikes "completely destroyed" three nuclear sites in the West Asian country in June.

"All three nuclear sites in Iran were completely destroyed and/or OBLITERATED. It would take years to bring them back into service, and if Iran wanted to do so, they would be much better off starting anew in three different locations prior to those sites being obliterated, should they decide to do so," Trump said in a post on Truth Social on Saturday. *—ANI*

Japan votes as PM's coalition looks weak

TOKYO, 20 JULY

The Japanese were voting on Sunday for seats in the smaller of Japan's two parliamentary houses in a key election with Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba and his ruling coalition facing a possible defeat that could worsen the country's political instability.

Voters were deciding half of the 248 seats in the upper house, the less powerful of the two chambers in Japan's Diet. Early results were expected Sunday night.

Ishiba has set the bar low, wanting a simple majority of 125 seats, which means his Liberal Democratic Party and its Buddhist-backed junior coalition partner Komeito need to win 50 to add to the 75 seats they already have.

Exit polls showed that Ishiba's coalition was likely to lose the majority.

A poor performance would not immediately trigger a change of government because the upper house lacks the power to file no-confidence against a leader, but it would certainly deepen uncertainty over his fate and Japan's political stability.

Ishiba would face calls from within the LDP party to step down or find another coalition partner.

Soaring prices, lagging incomes and burdensome social security payments are the top issues for frustrated, cash-strapped voters. *—PTI*

Ukraine proposes fresh truce talks with Russia

KYIV/ MOSCOW, 20 JULY

Ukraine has proposed to hold a new round of peace talks with Russia next week, following negotiations that stalled last month, according to Al Jazeera.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy confirmed on Saturday that Defence Council Secretary Rustem Umerov had made an offer for a meeting with Russian negotiators for next week.

"Everything should be done to achieve a ceasefire," Zelenskyy said in his evening address to the nation, Al Jazeera reported. "The Russian side should stop hiding from decisions."

Ukraine's leader also reiterated his readiness to have a face-to-face sit-down with Putin. "A meeting at the leadership level is needed to truly ensure peace-lasting peace," he said.

Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov later said that Russia is open to peace but achieving it's goals remains a priority.

"This is a long process, it requires effort, and it is not easy," Peskov said. "The main thing for us is to achieve our goals. Our goals are clear." *—ANI/ PTI*

Rains kill dozens across Pakistan, South Korea

ISLAMABAD/ SEOUL/ HONG KONG, 20 JULY

Heavy rains brought ruin across several Asian countries, killing dozens of people and disrupting normal life.

10 MORE KILLED IN PAK; TOLL CROSSES 200

The death toll in Pakistan due to monsoon rains crossed 203 on Sunday as another 10 people have been killed, according to the country's chief disaster control body.

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) said 18 more were injured Saturday.

Nine were in Punjab and one in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), while of the 18 injured, 17 were in Punjab and one in KP.

The seasonal downpour began on 26 June when the first spell of monsoon rain was recorded, triggering flash floods in the northwest of the country.

Torrential rains in South Korea claimed 14 lives over five days, with thousands unable to return home PHOTO: X

12 DEAD IN S KOREA, 12 MISSING

Torrential rains that slammed South Korea for five days have left 14 people dead and 12 others missing, the government said Sunday.

Eight people were found dead and six others were reported missing in the southern town of Sancheong on Saturday after landslides, house collapses and flash floods.

As of 9am on Sunday, about 3,840 people remain evacuated from their homes.

TYPHOON WIPHA CAUSES FLASH FLOODS IN CHINA

Typhoon Wipha caused major flight disruptions Sunday in Hong Kong and at some nearby airports in China as it moved west along the southern coast. Airports in Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Macao cancelled or postponed all their daytime flights, their websites showed. Some high-speed train service in the area was suspended.

The Hong Kong Observatory issued a hurricane signal No. 10, its highest warning.

The eye of the storm had sustained maximum winds of 140kmph, the Observatory said. *—PTI*

Tsunami warning after 2 large quakes off Russia's coast

MOSCOW, 20 JULY

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre issued a warning for Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula after two quakes — the larger with a magnitude of 7.4 — struck in the sea nearby on Sunday. It later said there was no danger of a tsunami.

The larger quake was at a depth of 20kms and was 144kms east of the city of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, which has a population of 180,000, according to the US Geological Survey.A few minutes earlier, a quake with a magnitude of 6.7 was recorded nearby. The German Research Centre for Geosciences indicated twin earthquakes of over 6.5 magnitude struck near the coast of Kamchatka, in Russia's far east, early on Sunday. There were no reports of casualties. *—PTI*

SEVERAL DEAD IN WASHINGTON SHOOTING

WASHINGTON, 20 JULY

A shooting incident in Renton, Washington, has reportedly left multiple victims, with early reports indicating three fatalities.

The Renton Police Department stated that the shooting occurred just after 7.30pm near Kirkland Avenue NE and NE 18th Street, prompting a significant police presence as the investigation unfolds.

However, there has been no official confirmation of the casualties as of yet.

The police urged the public to avoid the area due to the ongoing investigation.

"This is an active scene, so expect a heavy police presence. Please avoid the area," the department stated, adding that a public information officer was on the way.

This event comes just over a week after another shooting at a transit centre in Renton, where a man was shot five times following a dispute between groups. It also comes after a vehicle ploughed into a Los Angles crowd, injuring over 30 people, seven of whom are in a critical condition. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Prince Al-Waleed bin Khaled, 36, dies after 20 years in a coma PHOTO: X-@YABALEFTONLINE

Saudi's 'Sleeping Prince' dies at 36

RIYADH, 20 JULY

Saudi Arabia's Prince Al Waleed bin Khaled bin Talal Al Saud, affectionately known as the "Sleeping Prince," has passed away at the age of 36 after nearly 20 years in a coma following a car accident in London in 2005. Born in April 1990, he was the eldest son of Prince Khaled bin Talal Al Saud, a notable Saudi royal, and a nephew of billionaire Prince Al Waleed bin Talal.

The tragedy unfolded when he was just 15 years old and studying at a military college in the UK. Despite extensive medical effortshe never regained full consciousness.

He spent nearly two decades on life support at King Abdulaziz Medical City in Riyadh. *—Agencies*

ANKLE MONITOR TRACKS HIM

Everything about ex-Brazil prez Jair Bolsonaro's trial

RIO DE JANEIRO, 20 JULY

Brazil's former president Jair Bolsonaro will wear an electronic ankle monitor on orders from the Supreme Court, where he is on trial for allegedly masterminding a coup plot to remain in office despite his defeat in the 2022 election.

The case received renewed attention after Donald Trump directly tied a 50 per cent tariff on Brazilian imported goods to Bolsonaro's judicial situation, which the US President called a "witch hunt."

The Supreme Court's order for Bolsonaro to wear an ankle monitor, among other restrictions, came after Federal Police and prosecutors said Bolsonaro is a flight risk. Authorities also accused Bolsonaro of working with his son Eduardo to incite the US to interfere in the trial and impose sanctions against Brazilian officials, which the Trump administration did.

The prosecution accuses Bolsonaro of leading an armed criminal organisation since at least 2021, attempting to stage a coup and attempting the violent abolition of the democratic rule of law, aggravated damage, and deterioration of listed heritage sites. Police say that after Bolsonaro's loss to current President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, the organisation conspired to overturn the election result.

Jair Bolsonaro PHOTO: PTI

Part of that plot included a plan to kill Lula and a Supreme Court Justice, the prosecution alleges. It also says that the 8 January riot when Bolsonaro supporters ransacked top government buildings a week after Lula took office was an attempt to force military intervention.

A court order unsealed Friday said Bolsonaro and his son may also have committed the crimes of coercion during a legal proceeding, obstruction of an investigation, and attack on Brazil's sovereignty.

After the prosecution called for a guilty verdict in its final allegations issued Tuesday, the defence will soon present its case, likely in the coming weeks. A decision is expected before the end of the year.

Brazil's top electoral court has already banned Bolsonaro from running in elections until 2030 over abuse of power while in office. *—PTI*

The capsised tourist boat with 53 people on board in Ha Long Bay was successfully salvaged, towed ashore for further investigation PHOTO: X

Vietnam boat survivor swam towards the light

HA LONG BAY, 20 JULY

A Vietnamese man has recounted his harrowing escape from a capsized tour boat that led to the tragic deaths of at least 38 people, with five still missing, according to state media reports.

The Wonder Sea, carrying 48 passengers and five crew, set off for a three-hour excursion on Saturday afternoon. However, a sudden storm brought high winds and heavy rain. Survivor Dang Anh Tuan revealed that despite passengers' pleas to return to shore, the crew insisted they were nearly at their destination.

"It rained for about 15 minutes, and then the boat started to shake vigorously... seconds later the boat overturned," the 36-year-old told The Associated Press. Tuan managed to escape by diving down and swimming toward a streak of light, ultimately clinging to the capsized vessel alongside three others for two hours until rescuers arrived.

Rescue teams managed to save 11 individuals, although one later died in hospital from injuries sustained. Tragically, Tuan's group of 12 university friends suffered heavily, with nine confirmed dead. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FB

Dr Reddy's gets 7 observations from USFDA

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Dr Reddy's Laboratories has received a Form 483 with seven observations from the US health regulator for its Srikakulam-based plant in Andhra Pradesh, according to a regulatory filing. The US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) conducted the GMP and a Pre-Approval Inspection at the formulations manufacturing facility from 10 to 18 July, 2025, the Hyderabad-based drug major said in the filing. "We have been issued a Form 483 with seven observations, which we will address within the stipulated timeline," it added. As per the USFDA, Form 483 is issued to a firm's management at the conclusion of an inspection when the investigator has observed any conditions that may constitute violations of the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act and related Acts. *—PTI*

Auto exports up 22% in April-June

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Automobile exports from India rose 22 per cent year-on-year in the April-June quarter driven by record shipment of passenger vehicles and robust growth in segments like two-wheelers and commercial vehicles, according to industry body SIAM. Total exports across segments rose to 14,57,461 units in the first quarter as compared to 11,92,566 units in April-June quarter of last financial year. Passenger vehicles sector saw the highest-ever exports in the first quarter at 2,04,330 units, a growth of 13 per cent compared to 1,80,483 units in the same period last year. Export growth in this segment was driven by stable demand across most markets, with strong performance in the Middle East and Latin America, Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers said. *—PTI*

THDC India raises Rs 600 cr via NCDs

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

State-owned THDC India has raised Rs 600 crore through issuance of non-convertible debentures on private placement basis on 18 July, a statement said. The issuance was at a coupon rate of 7.45 per cent with maturity of 10 years. Proceeds of the bonds will be used to partly meet debt requirements of ongoing and under construction projects including recoupment of expenditure already incurred and to refinance the existing loans. Sipan Kumar Garg, Director (Finance) and CFO said the bond issue had a base size of Rs 200 crore and a green shoe option of Rs 400 crore, aggregating to a total issue size of Rs 600 crore. THDC India is steadily expanding its portfolio across diverse energy portfolios. *—PTI*

NIRL to go public in 2027; raises Rs 4,000 crore

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

NIRL, the renewable energy division of state-owned NLC India, plans to launch an initial public offering (IPO) in the second quarter of the next financial year, aiming to raise approximately Rs 4,000 crore to fund its expansion. Prasanna Kumar Motupalli, Chairman and Managing Director of NLCIL, revealed that the firm intends to increase its renewable energy capacity from 1.4GW to 10GW by 2030. The company aims to file draft documents with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) by the first quarter of 2026-27. Additionally, the NLCIL has received the approval to invest Rs 7,000 crore in NIRL, enabling direct project investments without the usual approvals required for public sector enterprises. *—PTI*

6 top firms' mcap slumps ₹94.4K cr

Tata Consultancy and Reliance Industries took the biggest hit

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

The combined market valuation of 6 of the top-10 most valued firms declined by Rs 94,433.12 crore last week, with Tata Consultancy Services and Reliance Industries taking the biggest hit, in line with a bearish trend in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark tumbled 742.74 points or 0.90 per cent.

While Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Bharti Airtel, Infosys and Hindustan Unilever suffered erosion from their market valuation last week, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finance and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) emerged as gainers.

The valuation of TCS tumbled Rs 27,334.65 crore to Rs 11,54,115.65 crore, the most among the top-10 firms.

Reliance Industries suffered an erosion of Rs 24,358.45 crore to Rs 19,98,543.22 crore from its valuation.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of HDFC Bank tanked Rs 20,051.59 crore to Rs 15,00,917.42 crore.

Bharti Airtel's mcap dropped by Rs 11,888.89 crore to Rs 10,83,998.73 crore, and that of Hindustan Unilever declined by Rs 7,330.72 crore to Rs 5,84,789.77 crore.

The mcap of Infosys dived Rs 3,468.82 crore to Rs 6,59,096.12 crore.

However, the valuation of the State Bank of India jumped Rs 13,208.44 crore to Rs 7,34,763.97 crore.

The mcap of Bajaj Finance surged Rs 5,282.15 crore to Rs 5,85,292.83 crore, while ICICI Bank added Rs 3,095 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 10,18,008.73 crore.

The market capitalisation of LIC climbed Rs 506 crore to Rs 5,83,828.91 crore.

Reliance Industries was leading the pack of the top-10 firms, followed by HDFC Bank, TCS, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Infosys, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever and LIC. *— PTI*

The valuation of the Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), tumbled Rs 27,334.65 crore to Rs 11,54,115.65 crore, the most among the top-10 firms *PHOTO: PTI*

Gold price to be range-bound amid market uncertainty

Gold prices are likely to remain range-bound in the coming week as investors await clarity on global trade negotiations, upcoming US macro-economic data and signals from the Federal Reserve, analysts said. Traders will closely watch Fed Chair Jerome Powell's speech and global PMI data from major economies, including the US, UK and Eurozone. The European Central Bank's interest rate decision will also be closely tracked for cues on the bullion price trajectory, they said. *—PTI*

Q1, India-US trade talks to rule markets

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Trading sentiment in the stock market this week will be guided by quarterly earning announcements from blue-chips such as Infosys and Bajaj Finance, the outcome of India-US trade talks and global cues, analysts said. Reliance Industries on Friday reported its highest-ever quarterly profit of Rs 26,994 crore for the June quarter, reflecting a growth of 78.3 per cent over the year-ago period, driven by consumer businesses and investment sales. Investors will first react to the results of three heavyweights – Reliance, HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank – during early trades on Monday. *—PTI*

Foreign investors pull out ₹5.5K cr in July

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

After three months of fund infusion, foreign investors turned net sellers with withdrawal of Rs 5,524 crore so far in July, due to ongoing trade tensions between the US and India and mixed corporate results.

With this, the total outflow has reached Rs 83,245 crore so far in 2025, data with the depositories showed.

Looking ahead, the trajectory of FPI flows will hinge on developments in the US-India trade negotiations and corporate earnings, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

Going by the depositories data, Foreign Portfolio Investors withdrew a net sum of Rs 5,524 crore from equities this month (till 18 July). This came following a net investment of Rs 14,590 crore in June, Rs 19,860 crore in May and Rs 4,223 crore in April. Prior to this, FPIs had pulled out Rs 3,973 crore in March, Rs 34,574 crore in February, and a substantial Rs 78,027 crore in January. *—PTI*

Vedanta Semiconductor is Rs 2,500 cr sham: Viceroy

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Continuing its triad against mining Moghul Anil Agarwal's Vedanta group, US-based Viceroy Research has alleged that the group's semiconductor unit was a "sham commodities trading operation", designed to avoid classification as an NBFC, a charge the mining conglomerate dismissed as baseless.

US short seller Viceroy Research, which last week published a scathing report about Vedanta Group and followed it with similar reports on group companies, in fresh allegations said Vedanta Ltd's subsidiary, Vedanta Semiconductors Pvt Ltd, was part of a scheme to allow the Mumbai-listed firm to remit brand fees to parent Vedanta Resources in April this year, when it faced a severe liquidity crisis.

In a statement, Vedanta spokesperson said the group "strongly rejects the baseless allegations made in the report regarding Vedanta Semiconductors Pvt Ltd (VSPL)".

"All business activities of VSPL have been transparently disclosed and are in line with statutory norms," it said.

Viceroy said, "VSPL is a sham commodities trading operation designed to improperly avoid classification as a Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC)".

"This scheme was devised to facilitate Vedanta Ltd's remittance of brand fees to Vedanta Resources' (VRL) in April 2025, when it faced a severe liquidity crisis," Viceroy said.

In April 2024, Vedanta Limited (VEDL) faced a severe liquidity crisis. "In response, VEDL reactivated VSPL, not as a semiconductor venture, but as a zero-margin trading entity, whose operations appear to consist entirely of paper-based commodity trading."

VSPL, it said, remitted the loan to VEDL as a 24-month 12 per cent loan, with the spread intended to cover the sham operation's costs. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

IPO fundraising up by 45% to Rs 45,350 crore

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Fundraising through initial public offerings (IPOs) in India surged to Rs 45,350 crore in the first half of 2025, representing a remarkable 45 per cent increase from the same period last year, despite facing global trade headwinds and geopolitical tensions.

However, the number of IPOs fell to 24 from 36 in January to June 2024, suggesting an increase in the average size of public issues. Merchant bankers reported that 24 companies successfully raised funds during this period, compared to Rs 31,281 crore by 36 firms a year ago. Additionally, there was a significant rise in draft IPO filings with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), with 118 companies submitting preliminary papers.

Additionally, Indiqube Spaces Ltd, which will soon launch an IPO, has posted a net loss of Rs 139.61 crore during the last fiscal on higher expenses. The net loss of Indiqubestood at Rs 341.50 crore during the 2023-24 fiscal. *—PTI*

29% INCREASE

Rs 15,851 cr fraudulent ITC claims uncovered

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

GST officers have identified fraudulent claims of input tax credit (ITC) totalling Rs 15,851 crore during the April to June quarter of the current financial year, marking a 29 per cent increase compared to the previous year. Despite this rise in monetary value, the number of fake firms detected decreased to 3,558 from 3,840 in the same quarter last year.

A panel of state finance ministers, chaired by Goa's Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, is currently investigating tax evasion in targeted sectors to combat ITC fraud. An official stated, "On average, around 1,200 fake firms are detected each month. The reduction in detection this year suggests that our efforts against fake GST registrations are yielding results."

In the first quarter of FY25, Rs 12,304 crore was attributed to fraudulent ITC claims involving 3,840 fake entities. During the latest investigation, 53 individuals were arrested and Rs 659 crore was recovered.

Under the Goods and Services Tax framework, ITC allows businesses to claim credit for taxes paid on purchases, but unscrupulous parties have exploited this system by creating fictitious companies.

To counter these fraudulent activities, the GST registration process has been intensified, instituting checks on high-risk applicants.

Furthermore, the GST Act includes provisions for penalties against wrongfully availed ITC and the suspension of registrations involved in such fraud. *—PTI*

Astronomer CEO resigns after affair caught on cam

WASHINGTON, 20 JULY

Andy Byron, the CEO of Cincinnati-based Astronomer Inc who was captured in a widely circulated video showing him embracing an employee at a Coldplay concert has resigned, said a statement posted on LinkedIn by the company on Saturday.

The move comes a day after the company said that Byron had been placed on leave and it has launched an investigation into incident.

The short video clip shows Byron and Cabot as captured on the jumbotron at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts, during a Coldplay concert on Wednesday. Internet users identified the man as the CEO of a US-based company.

A company spokesman later confirmed in a statement to AP that it was Byron Cabot in the video. *—PTI*

JSW Paints eyes majority stake in Akzo Nobel for Rs 12,915 cr

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Sajjan Jindal-led JSW Paints has sought approval from the Competition Commission of India (CCI) to acquire a majority stake in Dutch paint maker Akzo Nobel India Limited (ANIL) unit in a Rs 12,915-crore deal.

The development came after JSW Paints announced in June this year that it will buy a 74.76 per cent stake in ANIL for Rs 8,986 crore, followed by an open offer to buy another 25 per cent from open market for up to Rs 3,929.06 crore, totalling over Rs 12,915 crore, to become the fourth-largest player in the paint industry in the country.

"The proposed transaction relates to the acquisition of up to 75 per cent shareholding in the target, ANIL by the acquirer, JSW Paints Ltd through a share purchase agreement, and a mandatory open offer," said a notice filed with the Competition Commission of India.

The parties said the proposed combination does not raise competition concerns in any plausible relevant markets and therefore, the relevant market delineations may be left open.

JSW Paints is a part of the USD 23 billion JSW Group, one of India's leading conglomerates with diverse interests across a range of B2B and B2C sectors. *—PTI*

OVER 50K SHOWS GENERATED

Pocket FM cuts production cost using AI to make shows

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Audio entertainment platform Pocket FM on Sunday said it has significantly reduced production costs through its proprietary artificial intelligence systems.

The company has scaled its content operations significantly over the past year, producing over 50,000 AI-generated shows, a statement said.

"We are transforming Pocket FM into an AI-led entertainment company, with artificial intelligence now driving content creation, productivity, and global storytelling at scale," said Rohan Nayak, co-founder and CEO.

"AI is helping us unlock high quality content faster and more efficiently than ever before. Our content costs have been significantly reduced, while creator efficiency has increased tenfold."

Known for pioneering long form episodic audio storytelling, Pocket FM has built custom AI infrastructure that enables creators from scripting and voice generation to sound design and multi language localization.

These capabilities have significantly enhanced speed to market while maintaining narrative depth and production quality, it stated.

At the heart of this transformation is a seamless collaboration between human creativity and AI precision, enabling Pocket FM to produce great stories at scale without compromising on quality, the statement said.

The company reported Rs 1,768 crore in revenue for FY25, a 68 per cent year-on-year increase, and is now profitable across markets. *—PTI*

Low yields stall revival of naturally coloured cotton

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

India's naturally coloured cotton, which thrived commercially in the 1940s, is struggling to stage a comeback despite rising global demand for sustainable textiles and decades of government's efforts in research.

The specialty crop is currently grown on just 200 acres across Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, fetching Rs 240 per kg, 50 per cent more than regular cotton at Rs 160 per kg. However, farmers are hesitant to expand cultivation due to significantly lower yields. Annual production from these limited acres stands at merely 330 quintals, underscoring challenge facing this specialty crop that could potentially transform India's textile sustainability profile.

Once grown commercially, after independence, the Green Revolution's emphasis on high yielding pushed coloured cotton to the sidelines.

The crop's inherent limitations - fewer bolls, lower weight, poor fibre strength, short staple length and colour variations - made it economically unviable for large-scale cultivation.

Nevertheless, the environmental benefits of cultivating naturally coloured cotton is significant. It has the potential to reduce toxic waste disposal costs by 50 per cent. *—PTI*

iPhone ordered to refund its customers

MUMBAI, 20 JULY

A consumer commission in Mumbai has mandated Apple India and retailer Croma to refund Rs 65,264 for an iPhone that allegedly suffered from a microphone defect, ruling that both companies are jointly liable for the deficient service provided.

The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission determined that the manufacturer could not dismiss the issue as resulting from unauthorized modifications when service was sought.

The complainant, who recently passed away, had purchased the iPhone 11 and faced issues with the microphone.

Despite numerous approaches to Apple's authorised service centre, the request for repairs was declined based on claims of warranty violations due to alleged modifications.

It directed Apple and Croma to refund the purchase cost, along with an additional Rs 15,000 for mental distress and Rs 2,000 for legal expenses. *—PTI*

Usyk beats Daniel, wins heavyweight championship

LONDON, 20 JULY

Oleksandr Usyk delivered a dominating performance Saturday night and knocked out Daniel Dubois in the fifth round in London to become the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world. The victory, sealed with a crunching left hook to Dubois' jaw, made Usyk the undisputed world heavyweight champion for a second time. The undefeated southpaw retained his WBA, WBC, and WBO belts and regained the IBF belt he relinquished just over a year ago. The bad news for opponents, especially the British ones that he keeps beating, is that the 38-year-old Ukrainian has no plans to stop anytime soon. He said he's still a "young guy" and named Tyson Fury, Derek Chisora, Anthony Joshua, and Joseph Parker as possible next foes. Jake Paul threw his hat in the ring.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Carlsen to fight for third place after win over Arjun

LAS VEGAS, 20 JULY

World number one Magnus Carlsen found his rhythm back, defeating Arjun Erigaisi 2-0 and R Praggnanandhaa 3-1 in the Freestyle chess Grand Slam, which is drawing to a close here. With Hans Moke Niemann taking on his American counterpart Levon Aronian in the finals, Carlsen set up a clash with world number two American Hikaru Nakamura for the third place in the USD 750,000 prize money event. It turned out to be an eventful two matches for Carlsen, who was earlier denied the chance to win the event by Praggnanandhaa.—*PTI*

Rovman Powell eyes Chris Gayle's record

ANTIGUA, 20 JULY

All eyes will be on Rovman Powell as the West Indies take on Australia in the first T20I of the five-match series on Monday. The former Windies captain is just 25 runs away from surpassing Chris Gayle to become the team's second-highest run-scorer in T20 Internationals a milestone that could make this clash one to remember. Following a 0-3 whitewash in the Test series, where West Indies struggled with the bat despite fiery spells with the ball, the T20I format offers the Caribbean side a fresh chance to bounce back and set the tone for the road to the 2026 T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Nishant Dev scores 3rd straight Pro KO

NEW DELHI, 20 JULY

Indian boxer Nishant Dev extended his flawless run in the professional circuit, securing a Technical Knockout win over American LaQuan Evans in Frisco, USA. The 24-year-old halted the more seasoned Evans in the sixth round of their Super Welterweight bout on Saturday night, recording his third consecutive professional victory. Dev unleashed a flurry of unanswered punches that left Evans defenceless, prompting the referee to stop the contest at 1:58 in the sixth and final round. The fight was part of the undercard for the unification clash between WBC champion Jesse Rodriguez and WBO titleholder Phumelela Cafu.—*PTI*

WCL cancels legends match between India and Pak

BIRMINGHAM, 20 JULY

Veterans' cricket match involving India and Pakistan in the World Championship of Legends here on Sunday has been cancelled after Indian players, including Shikhar Dhawan, refused to be a part of it, citing the Pahalgam terror attack in April.

The second edition of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) tournament, which is co-owned by Bollywood star Ajay Devgn, started on June 18 at Edgbaston here and is scheduled for an August 2 final.

World Cup winner Yuvraj Singh is the captain of the India Champions, while the squad also features the likes of Dhawan, Harbhajan Singh, Yusuf Pathan, Irfan Pathan, Suresh Raina, Robin Uthappa, and Varun Aaron among others.

The WCL organisers shared a statement on their X account, detailing the decision to cancel and said their intention while conducting the match was to recreate some "happy memories."

"After hearing the news that the Pakistan hockey team will be coming to India this year, and seeing the recent India vs Pakistan volleyball match along with a few other fixtures between the two nations in different sports, we thought of continuing with the India vs Pakistan match at WCL, just to create some happy memories for people around the globe.

"But maybe in the process, we ended up hurting the feelings of many and stirring emotions," the WCL statement read. The Pakistan team has in its ranks captain Shahid Afridi, Younis Khan, Sohail Tanvir, Wahab Riaz, Kamran Akmal, among a host of yesteryear players. The organisers also apologised for "unintentionally causing discomfort" to Indian legends.

"Hence, we have decided to call off the India-Pakistan match. —*PTI*

Kamboj added to India squad amid injury crisis

With 2 injured players, it's Kamboj's chance to join India's XI

MANCHESTER, 20 JULY

Pacer Anshul Kamboj has been added to the India squad on Sunday in England as cover for Akash Deep and Arshdeep Singh, who are racing against time to be ready for the fourth Test beginning here at Old Trafford on 23 July.

Akash Deep, who is dealing with a groin niggle, played in the second and third Test against England at Birmingham and Lord's respectively, while left-arm pacer Arshdeep is yet to feature in a match in the ongoing series.

There is no clarity as yet on Akash Deep's availability, while Arshdeep is unlikely to be available for selection for the Manchester Test, and therefore, the selectors decided to call Kamboj, PTI has learned.

Arshdeep copped a blow on his left hand while trying to stop a shot from Sai Sudharsan on his follow-through during the net session at Beckenham on Thursday, which necessitated the bandaging of his bowling arm.

"We'll take a call on the combination we play, particularly given the Arshdeep situation as well, we'll make that call closer to Manchester," assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate had said.

The 24-year-old Kamboj is a worthy addition to the squad after his impressive effort for India A against the England Lions in two side games before the Test series.

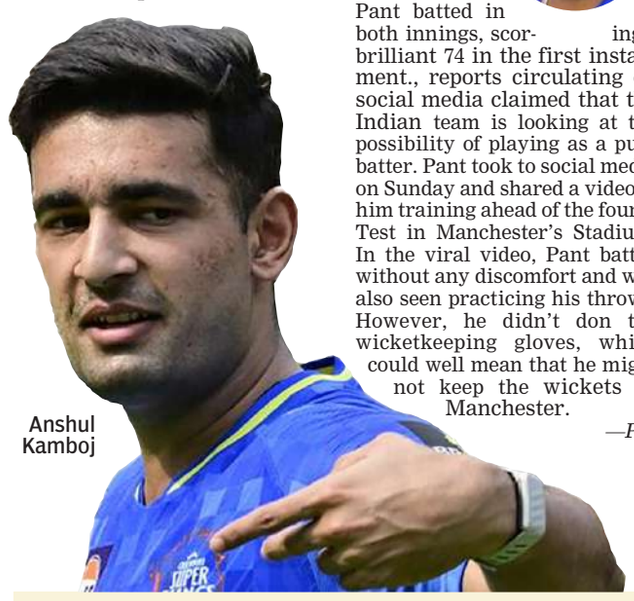
ENGLAND REMAINS DESTINATION FOR WTC FINALS

The International Cricket Council (ICC, on Saturday, awarded the hosting rights for the next three editions of the World Test Championship finals to England. The global body decided at its annual conference, which concluded in Singapore on Sunday. The three WTC finals are scheduled in 2027, which is the time for the cricket season in England. The England and Wales Cricket Board, ECB, has already hosted the 2021 final in Southampton, India vs New Zealand, India vs Australia, and the 2025 edition finale at the Lord's, South Africa vs Australia, ., 2029 and 2031 after completion of two year cycles will in all likelihood be held in June, 2023 summit clash at the Oval in London.

RISHABH PANT TO PLAY MANCHESTER TEST

Viral Video Adds Fresh Angle, India vice-captain Pant trained without any discomfort, amid reports suggesting that he could play as a pure batter in the fourth Test against England, starting July 23. Pant copped a blow to his finger on Day 1 of the 3rd Test at Lord's earlier this month. Dhruv Jurel replaced him as the wicketkeeper for the majority of the 1st innings, as well as the entirety of the second innings. However, Pant batted in both innings, scoring a brilliant 74 in the first installment., reports circulating on social media claimed that the Indian team is looking at the possibility of playing as a pure batter. Pant took to social media on Sunday and shared a video of him training ahead of the fourth Test in Manchester's Stadium. In the viral video, Pant batted without any discomfort and was also seen practicing his throws. However, he didn't don the wicketkeeping gloves, which could well mean that he might not keep the wickets in Manchester.

—*PTI*



Anshul Kamboj

1st T20: B'desh beat Pakistan

Bangladesh brushed aside Pakistan in a seven-wicket win in the first T20I in Dhaka. Bangladesh's bowlers and fielders did the main damage when they bowled out Pakistan, for the first time in T20Is, for 110 runs in 19.3 overs. Parvez Hossain Emon struck an unbeaten 56 in the chase, slamming five sixes and three fours in his 39-ball effort. It greatly helped Bangladesh to complete the chase in 15.3 overs. Pakistan were already on the backfoot when they were put to bat. Taskin took three wickets while the fielders effected three run-outs. Bangladesh 112 for 3 (Parvez 56*, Hridoy 36, Mirza 2-17) beat Pakistan 110 (Fakhar 44, Afridi 22, Taskin 3-22) by seven wickets

I feel out of place next to Tendulkar with the trophy: Anderson

LONDON, 20 JULY

England pace legend James Anderson confessed that seeing his name alongside the iconic Sachin Tendulkar on a trophy feels "completely out of place," calling it an incredible honour to be associated with "one of the greatest cricketers to have ever lived".

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has rechristened the Test series between India and England as the Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy, paying tribute to the two titans of the sport.

Previously, the contests on English soil were played for the Pataudi Trophy, named after former Indian captains Iftikhar Ali Khan Pataudi and his son Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi. —*PTI*

WORLD ATHLETICS CONTINENTAL TOUR

Sreeshankar wins long jump title in Portugal

PORTUGAL, 20 JULY

Star Indian long jumper Murali Sreeshankar clinched the title with a leap of 7.75m at the Meeting Maia Cidade do Desporto in Maia, Portugal, a World Athletics Continental Tour Bronze-level meet.

The Asian Games silver medallist registered his best effort in the second round on Saturday night. Sreeshankar opened with a 7.63m jump, followed it up with his winning leap of 7.75m in the second round, and then recorded a solid 7.69m.

His third attempt was a foul, while his final two jumps were measured at 6.12m and 7.58m. Poland's Piotr Tarkowski matched Sreeshankar's 7.75m effort, but his second-best jump of 7.58m was less than the Indian's 7.69m.

According to the World Athletics rules, if two competitors tie, their second-longest legal jump is used as a tie-breaker. The meet marks the 26-year-old's second outing since returning from a long injury layoff following knee surgery. He had announced his comeback with a solid 8.05m win at the Indian Open Athletics Meet earlier this month.

Sreeshankar will aim to qualify for the World Championships in Tokyo in September, for which the direct qualifying distance is 8.27m.

The Commonwealth Games silver medallist will be competing in Europe and Central Asia till August 14, for which the government has approved Rs 5.58 lakh. —*PTI*

Stage set for Scheffler to claim first British Open

PORTRUSH, 20 JULY

World number one Scottie Scheffler will be the overwhelmingfavourite to claim his first British Open title when he begins his final roundwith a four-stroke lead of a packed chasing field at Royal Portrush on Sunday.

Lowry, winner atPortrush six years ago, signed off with a five-under 66, with Mickelson cardinga 67.

But the seriousbusiness will begin later when the leading groups take to the Dunluce Links forwhat promises to be a compelling conclusion to the 153rd Open. Quite how excitingit gets will depend very much on 29-year-old Scheffler, who, after ascintillating round of 64 on Friday and Saturday's error-free 67, is closing inon his first major outside of the United States, having twice won the Mastersand then triumphing at this year's PGA Championship.

Average day for Bhatia and Rai at British Open

Indian American golfer Akshay Bhatia shot a 1-under 70 in the third round to be tied 34th at the British Open here.

Bhatia had two birdies on the seventh and the ninth and seemed to be ready to get more before two bogeys on the back nine. Indo-British Aaron Rai, who had shown a lot of promise in the first eight holes on the first day, seemed to have lost that momentum. . —*PTI*

Badminton Asia Jr Mixed: India beat HK, top Group D

SOLO, 20 JULY

India continued their winning run, defeating Hong Kong China 110-100 to top Group D at the Badminton Asia Junior Mixed Team Championships here on Sunday.

Both India and Hong Kong had already secured their spots in the knockout stage before their face-off.

Rujula Ramu once again gave India a winning start, beating IP Sum Yau 11-8, and the world number six doubles combination of Bhargav Ram Arigela and Viswa Tej Gobburu extended the lead to 22-13 against Cheung Sai Shing and Deng Chi Fai.

Hong Kong's Lam Ka To helped his team close the gap as he scored 13 points before Rounak Chouhan could take India's tally to 33. —*PTI*

Nataraj betters 'Best Indian Time' in WUG 100m freestyle

BERLIN, 20 JULY

Swimmer Srihari Nataraj continued his record-breaking spree on Sunday as he bettered the 'Best Indian Time' in men's 100m freestyle, clocking 49.46 seconds to qualify for the semifinals at the World University Games here.

Nataraj erased Guangzhou Asian Games bronze medallist Virdhawal Khade's long-standing mark of 49.47 seconds set way back in 2008 from the record books.He won heat number 6 race and made it to the semifinals in 12th position overall.On Friday, Nataraj had twice bettered his own 'Best Indian Time' in the 200m freestyle event.

In swimming, national record timings are those achieved only at the National Aquatics Championships. Timings clocked in other meets are considered "Best Indian Time" or "Best Indian Performance".

Srihari was the second Indian swimmer to reach the semifinals here at these Games after Benediction Rohit, who also set two new 'Best Indian Time' in 50m butterfly to finish 13th overall. On Friday, India has one more medal event in taekwondo, where the Indian women's Poomsae team will compete in the final round after defeating Ecuador in the preliminary round. —*PTI*

Swimmer Srihari Nataraj

Messi and Telasco beat Red Bulls 5-1

HARRISON, 20 JULY

Lionel Messi had two goals and two assists, Telasco Segovia also scored twice, and Inter Miami beat the New York Red Bulls 5-1.

It was Messi's sixth multi-goal game in his last seven matches.

Messi became the fifth player in MLS history to record at least 35 goals and 25 assists over two years, joining Robbie Keane (2013-14), Sebastian Giovinco (2015-16), Carlos Vela (2018-19), and Cucho Hernández (2023-24).

Miami scored two goals in three minutes midway through the first half to take the lead. Messi's beautiful pass to Jordi Alba tied it at 1-all in the 24th minute. Then Messi's lofted pass over the defense led to Segovia's first goal.

Messi scored on a breakaway in the 60th and he chested down Luis Suárez's pass for a left-footed blast in the 75th for his 18th goal of the season.

Miami (12-4-5) has dominated the past three matchups with the Red Bulls, winning 6-2 on 3 May, 2024, and 4-1 on 3 May, 2025. —*PTI*

EURO 2025

Germany beats France on penalties to reach SFs

BASEL, 20 JULY

Germany overcame France on penalties and reached the semifinals of the Women's European Championship despite playing almost the entire match and extra time with 10 players.

A drama-filled match finished 1-1 on Saturday, then Germany won the shootout 6-5 thanks to the heroics of Ann-Katrin Berger, who saved two shots as well as dispatched her spot kick. There were tears of joy from the German players after perhaps one of the greatest examples in soccer history of digging deep to defy the odds. "Everyone was in each other's arms," Germany coach Christian Wück said.

German players celebrate their penalty shootout win against France

PHOTO: ©FABRICE COFFRINI

"Everyone was celebrating; everyone was happy that this hard-fought performance led us to victory.

"I can only say it again and again: I'm so proud of the team for the way they took on this challenge against an opponent who demanded everything from us. That was incredible."

Germany, which is bidding for a record-extending ninth European Championship title, will face World Cup winner Spain in Zurich on Wednesday.

Early drama over hair-pulling That seemed improbable after less than 13 minutes when Germany midfielder Kathrin Hendrich pulled the hair of France captain Griedge Mbock and issued a straight red card.

Grace Geyoro converted the resulting penalty, but Sjoeke Nüsken headed her team level just 10 minutes later.

Despite being at a numerical disadvantage, Germany could have taken the lead with a penalty of its own. —*PTI*